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# **Imagining the Nation, Crafting the State: The Politics of Nationalism and Decolonisation in Somalia (1940-60)**

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## **Abstract**

The thesis offers a first-hand historically informed research on the trajectory of the making of the post-colonial state in Somalia (1940-60). It does so by investigating the interplay between the emergence and diffusion of national movements following the defeat of the Italians in 1941 and the establishment of a British Military Administration, and the process of decolonisation through a 10-year UN trusteeship to Italy in 1950. It examines the extent to which the features of Somali nationalism were affected/shaped by the institutional framework established by the UN mandate. The central argument of the thesis is that the imposition of the UN trusteeship, rather than enabling democratization, led to a ‘verticalisation’ of Somali nationalism and created a highly restrictive political space.

Based on a combination of archival and oral sources, the thesis explores the socioeconomic context and possibilities of the wartime. It argues that Somali nationalism developed an efficient and inclusive message that successfully engaged in dialogue with the masses in the 1940s. However, the protraction of the UN debate and the extension of the military administration caused the radicalisation of conflicts among different groups. The imposition of self-government and democratization through the trusteeship system led to the establishment of a highly centralised and fixed institutional framework. Within this context, not only nationalism came to lose its original horizontal and inclusive political line, but national politics were reduced to zero-sum competition to access power and power structures. Ultimately, this exclusive, autocratic and distorted version of the nation-state negatively affected the process of unification of Somalia and Somaliland.

By exploring the political trajectory leading to independence and unification, the thesis enhances a broader understanding of the development of post-colonial politics in Somalia. It contributes to specific discussions that centred on the features of the colonial legacy, on the effects of state and nation building, and on the consolidation of a clan-based discourse in post-colonial politics.

## **Declaration**

The thesis has been composed by myself from the results of my own work, except where otherwise acknowledged. It has not been submitted in any previous application for a degree.

Signed

(ANNALISA URBANO)

Date

*Canto per chi non ha fortuna,  
canto per me.  
Canto per rabbia a questa luna,  
contro di te.  
Canto a quel sole che verrà,  
tramonterà, rinascerà,  
alle illusioni,  
alle rabbia che mi fa.<sup>1</sup>*

---

<sup>1</sup> 'I sing for the unlucky ones,/ I sing for me./ I sing in anger at this moon,/against you./ I sing to that sun that will rise,/will set and be revived/ to the illusions/ to the anger I feel.' Nino Rota, Lina Wertmüller, 'Canzone Arrabbiata', 1973.

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my grandparents who taught me a lot and whom I miss much.

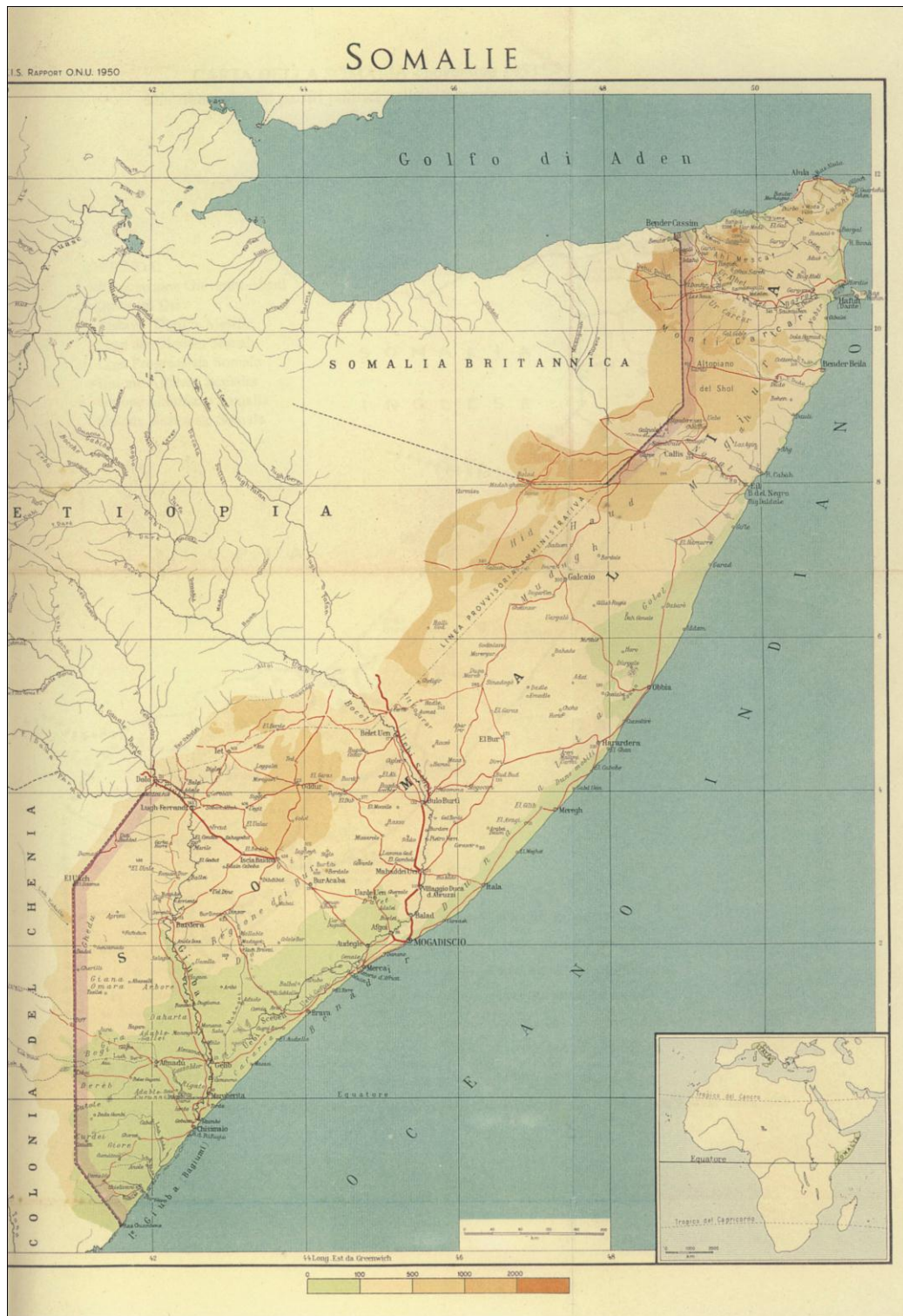
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Map of *Somalia Italiana* in 1950. Source: Ministero degli Affari Esteri, *Rapport du Gouvernement italien a l'Assemblée Generale des Nation Unies sur l'administration de la Somalie placée sous la tutelle de l'Italie, Avril 1950- Décembre 1950*, (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1951), Appendix.



**List of geographical names**

Somali spelling	Italian spelling	Colonial name
Adale		Itala
Afgooye	Afgoi	
Raas Caluula	RasAlula	
Balcad	Balad	
Baydhabo	Iscia Baidoa	
Baraawe	Brava	
Baladweyne	Belet Uen	
Bardheere	Bardera	
Boosaaso		Bender Cassim
Bulo Barde	Bulo Burti	
Buur Hakaba	Bur Acaba	
Ceerigaabo	Erigavo	
Gaalkacyo		Rocca Littorio
Hobyo	Obbia	
Kismaayo	Chisimaio	
Jamaame		Margherita di Savoia
Janaale	Genale	
Jilib	Gelib	
Jowhar		Villaggio Duca degli Abruzzi
Jubba	Giuba	
Luuq		Lugh Ferrandi
Marka	Merca	
Muqdishu/Xamar	Mogadiscio	
Qoryooley		Vittorio d'Africa
Saylac	Zeila	
Webi Shabeelle	Uebi Scebeli	
Xaafuun		Dante

Compiled from: Abla Osman Omar, *Somalia*, (Bologna: Edizioni Pendragon, 1998), p.8.



# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Prelude

In March 2009, I conducted several interviews<sup>1</sup> with elderly members of the Somali diaspora in London. After preliminary contacts, I was told to join them at the Burger King nearby the Stratford Railway Station, or at the ‘Parliament’ as they called it. There, they met weekly, sat, drank tea and discussed Somali politics and history. Some handled businesses over the phone, managing the sale of off-road vehicles from the Arabian Peninsula to Eastern Africa. Others commented the latest news coming from Mogadishu. To them I was introduced as ‘the Italian lady’ researching Somali independence, nationalism and unification. These were sensitive issues. Once an Italian colony and lost during the Second World War, Somalia<sup>2</sup> was ruled by a temporary British Military Administration (BMA) from 1941. The post-war period represented a time of possibilities, hopes and optimism for many Somalis. The end of Italian colonial rule and economic monopolies spurred socio-economic activities and the formation of political associations especially in Somalia’s capital Mogadishu. The development of a debate in the United Nations (UN) on former Italian colonies, Eritrea, Libya and Somalia, raised the possibility of self-government and independence via international mandate. At the same time, powerful nationalist organisations emerged from below and began to campaign in support of territorial unification of the Somali-speaking regions of the Horn of Africa. By 1946, Somali nationalism came to be associated with the idea of Greater Somalia –i.e. the project of unifying *Somalia Italiana*, the British Somaliland Protectorate, *Côte Française*

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<sup>1</sup> Four interviews with three informants.

<sup>2</sup> The term ‘Somalia’ has multiple meanings. Conventionally, it was used with reference to the former Italian colony, namely *Somalia Italiana*, and, by 1950, to the region under international trusteeship. After independence and the unification of the former Italian colony and the British Somaliland Protectorate, the name ‘Somalia’ came to indicate either the southern region of the unified country, or, more broadly, the Somali Republic. With the term ‘Somalia’, this research refers to the former Italian colony, *Somalia Italiana*, and to the region under trust administration. I use the name ‘Somaliland’ with reference to the former protectorate of British Somaliland and to the self-declared Republic of Somaliland. When referring to the unified state, I use the term ‘Somali Republic’.

*des Somalis* (today Djibouti)<sup>3</sup>, the Ethiopia's regions of Ogaden, the Haud and Reserved Areas (RA), and the Northern Frontier District of Kenya. In 1950, Somalia was placed under a 10-year international trusteeship to work towards independence under Italian rule (AFIS). Finally, on July 1, 1960, the trust territory became independent and unified with the British Somaliland Protectorate forming the Republic of Somalia. At the time, unification of the two was perceived as the first step towards Greater Somalia.

Despite raising hopes of wealth, prosperity and unity, Somali independence and unification were soon followed by bitter experiences. In the 1960s, the democratic system came to be associated largely with widespread corruption and was soon replaced by a military dictatorship led by Siad Barre in 1969. The regime lasted 21 years during which it became well-known for its brutal rule characterised by the 'MOD clan-formula',<sup>4</sup> civil rights violations and oppression. Similarly, the optimistic expectations raised by the idea of Greater Somalia were soon disillusioned: the attempts to promote territorial unification were repressed in Kenya; the national referendums in support of unification were rejected in Djibouti; tension within Somali-speaking regions in Ethiopia led to two armed conflict between Somalia and Ethiopia in 1964 and 1977-8. In particular, the latter conflict, the Ogaden War, ended with military and humanitarian disaster: hundreds of thousands died either because of the war or the famine and epidemics that followed; large crowds of refugees from Ethiopia fled to Somalia. In the early 1990s, Barre's regime was overthrown, Somaliland ceded the union, and the Somali state disintegrated.

Among the elderly Somalis who gathered at the 'Parliament', I had the opportunity to interview a former representative of the Barre's government.<sup>5</sup> The interviewee did not want to be recorded nor did he agree to engage directly with any

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<sup>3</sup> In the 1960s, the French colony was renamed as the *Territoire Français des Afars et des Issas*, and after independence in 1977 as the Republic of Djibouti. In this research, I refer to the region as Djibouti.

<sup>4</sup> The formula refers to the Mareehaan, Ogadeni and Dulbahante sub-clans to which Siad Barre was related.

<sup>5</sup> I have been asked to keep the name of the interviewee anonymous. In the Appendix, I provide a list of interviews with some background information to contextualise the anonymous interviews. However, no further information is revealed on this interviewee as to do so would compromise the informant's privacy.

of my questions. However, he was eager to explain to me ‘what went wrong’ with Somalia. The most vivid part of the conversation was the account of a 1978 meeting between the interviewee and a Soviet Union diplomat. Since 1974, Siad Barre’s regime had supported the secessionist movement in Ogaden.<sup>6</sup> In 1977, the Somali army embarked on a disastrous war against Ethiopia with the aim of seizing the Somali-speaking region. At first, the war was marked by a series of victories of the Somali army which, thanks to the military and financial support of the Soviet Union, penetrated into the Ogaden and advanced towards the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa. However, following the establishment of a Soviet-oriented military regime in Ethiopia, the Soviet Union switched its alliance by abandoning the Somali side in favour of Ethiopia which eventually won the conflict.<sup>7</sup> The interviewee contended that the ‘betrayal’ of the Soviet Union was the ‘beginning of the end’ for Somalia: it impeded the fulfilment of the national project of Greater Somalia bringing the country to disintegration. The interviewee narrated how he was able to take retribution for the betrayal of the Soviet military by expressing his anger and contempt to the Soviet Union diplomat. After a few minutes of silence, he concluded his account by saying:

We will be back! That land belongs to the Somalis. You know, the Ethiopians are like the brooms. They will pass away with the time. But we, we shall remain!<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile, a bunch of young and noisy Somali teenagers sat on the table next to ours. They had probably never been to Somalia or if they had, they were too young to remember it. Elderly Somalis call them the ‘Fish & Chips’ generation. The teenagers looked at us briefly with a bit of curiosity but soon kept on laughing, joking and having a good time as every other teenager in the ‘Parliament’. Their

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<sup>6</sup> Recently, Tobias Hagmann contested the use of the name ‘Ogaden’ to indicate Ethiopia’s Somali-speaking region for being inappropriate and ethnically charged. He proposed the use of the term ‘Region 5’. See Tobias Hagmann, ‘Beyond Clannishness and Colonialism: Understanding Political Disorder in Ethiopia’s Somali Region, 1991-2004’, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 43:4 (2005).

<sup>7</sup> On the Ogaden War see Christopher Clapham, *Africa and International System: The Politics of State Survival*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) chapter 6; Jeffrey A. Lefebvre, *Arms for the Horn: U.S. Security Policy in Ethiopia and Somalia, 1953-1991*, (Pittsburgh: The University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991), chapter 9.

<sup>8</sup> Interview, 26<sup>th</sup> March 2009.



teenage-carelessness was in stark contrast to the interviewee's concerns about Somali irredentist claims. And I wondered whether they knew anything at all about Greater Somalia.

## 1.2 The research problematic

This anonymous interviewee offered a way to make sense of the parabolic history of Somalia from the golden age of independence in 1960 to disintegration in 1991. Explaining this trajectory has become a major concern to scholars and political analysts alike. Within thirty years, Somalia passed from symbolising one of the 'brightest stars' among decolonised African states with a relatively strong cultural and historical national heritage,<sup>9</sup> to be almost exclusively associated with state collapse<sup>10</sup>, ethnic warfare and chaos. Most scholarly attention has focused on state collapse with the aim of providing theoretical frameworks for understanding the dynamics and mechanisms of recent developments in Somali politics and proposing solutions for future reconstruction.<sup>11</sup> Although these studies have proposed new approaches to the study of Somali society and politics, their analysis is penalised by lack of first-hand historically informed research on the political trajectory of the

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<sup>9</sup> Peter J. Schraeder, 'From Irredentism to Secession: The Decline of Pan-Somali Nationalism', in Lowell W. Barrington, *After Independence: Making and Protecting the Nation in Postcolonial and Postcommunist States*, (USA: the University of Michigan Press, 2006), p. 107.

<sup>10</sup> For definitions and differences between collapse states and failed states see Robert I. Rotberg, 'Failed States, Collapsed States, Weak States: Causes and Indicators', in Robert I. Rotberg (ed.), *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror* (Cambridge Mass.: World Peace Foundation, 2003). Accordingly a 'collapse state is a rare and extreme version of a failed state. Political goods are obtained through private or ad hoc means. Security is equated with the rule of the strong. A collapsed state exhibits a vacuum of authority. It is a mere geographical expression', p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> See: Hussein M. Adam, Richard Ford (eds.), *Mending the Rips in the Sky: Options for Somali Communities in the Twenty-First Century*, (Lawrenceville NJ: Red Sea Press, 1997); Hussein M. Adam, 'Somalia: A Terrible Beauty Being Born?', in William Zartamn, *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority*, (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995); Matt Bryden (ed.), *Rebuilding Somaliland: Issues and Possibilities* (Lawrenceville NJ and Asmara: The Red Sea Press Inc., 2005); Bronwyn E. Bruton, *Somalia: A New Approach*, (Council Special Report n.52) (Council of Foreign Relations Press, 2010); Terrence Lyons, Ahmed I. Samatar, *Somalia: State Collapse, Multilateral Intervention. And Strategies for Political Reconstruction*, (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institutions, 1995); Ken Menkhaus, *Somalia: State Collapse and the Threat of Terrorism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); War - Torn Societies Project Somali Programme, *Rebuilding Somalia: Issues and Possibilities for Puntland* (London: HAAN Associates, 2001). Different trends on Somalist studies are discussed in section 1.3.

making of the post-colonial state and unification.<sup>12</sup> There is a need to explore the development of these processes which include the crafting of institutional patterns ideated to support the nation-state. Such an investigation has to consider the interplay between the actors at play, and their interactions with state structures and governing bodies.

This study investigates the process of the making of the Somali state by looking at the interaction between nationalism and decolonisation in Somalia. In exploring this process, my intention is to analyse the features of the Somali nation imagined in the 1940s and the institutional structures and governing bodies that were crafted to frame and support the nation in the 1950s. The main argument suggests that the imposition of the UN trusteeship, rather than enabling democratization, led to a 'verticalisation' of Somali nationalism and created a highly restrictive political space. In order to express this contrast, the thesis will show that Somali nationalism developed a series of horizontal links to promote the collective project of territorial unification while simultaneously, the process of state-craft was marked by vertically oriented institutions. The thesis explores the construction of governing bodies, as representative organs at local and national level, electoral procedures, and their impacts on everyday politics. The conclusion will argue that as part of Somalia's colonial legacy, the institutional framework of the post-colonial state was marked by ambivalent tensions between its modernist character and 'traditional' features. This 'tribalised', exclusive, and autocratic state had a detrimental effect upon the features of nationalism and 1960 Somali unification.

Before investigating these processes, it is important to review the various historiographic trends on Somali studies. This is because over the last few decades, different theoretical approaches led scholars to emphasise certain aspects of Somali politics and history while neglecting issues related to the process of decolonisation and the making of the post-colonial state which remain under-explored. Afterwards, the chapter contextualises the historical themes of this research by presenting the

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<sup>12</sup> As discussed in the next section, such analysis remained based on secondary sources which are based either on a limited focus or limited sources. See also: Lidwien Kapteijns, 'The Disintegration of Somalia: A Historiographical Essay', *Bildhaan: An International Journal of Somalis Studies*, 1(2001), pp.11-52.

broader framework of the process of decolonisation in Africa and, in particular, in Somalia. The discussion then turns to aspects related to the legacies of the process of state-crafting. The chapter provides a definition of the concept of nationalism with a specific reference to the emergence and proliferation of Somali nationalist parties in the 1940s. Finally, the chapter presents the methodology in use for this research and the problems that have arisen in relation to the process of data collection.

### 1.3 Historiographies on Somali studies

The dissolution of nation-state in Somalia produced a vigorous and bitter scholarly debate. The core of these discussions has investigated the extent to which the paradigm of agnation at the basis of Somali society – commonly defined as clan system – has to be accounted for the collapse of Somali state, the eruption of civil conflicts and the fragmentation of the Somali nation. Discussions have been led by proponents of two different trends which can be broadly divided into primordialist and constructivist approaches. Led by the pioneer works of anthropologist Ioan Lewis, primordialist trends approached Somali society, history and politics through the basic institution constituted by the paradigm of agnation. This paradigm constitutes a system based on patrilineal descent consisting of clan-families and sub-clans which regulate socio-political organisation. Divided into clan-families, it was argued that Somali society consisted of *achefalus* pastoral nomads chiefly and of some sedentarist (or semi-) agriculturist communities living in the southern regions among which social hierarchy was more predominant.<sup>13</sup> Scholars tended to stress the importance of this paradigm as all-embracing principle for Somali society which, it was suggested, was characterised by distinct features of homogeneity in terms of culture, history, language, religion and social structures.<sup>14</sup> The stress on homogenous

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<sup>13</sup> Ioan M. Lewis *A Pastoral Society: A Study of Pastoralism and Politics among the Northern Somali of the Horn of Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), especially chapters 4-5.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*; Ioan M. Lewis, *A Modern History of the Somali*, (Oxford: James Currey, 2002), especially chapter 1. Lewis's comprehensive study on Somali history was originally published in 1965 as a history of the British Somaliland Protectorate and later expanded. This thesis relies on the fourth and most recent edition of the volume. It is worth noticing that although revised and expanded, the work and the core argument remained essentially the same. In particular, the first nine chapters (the ones dealing with the period under investigation in the research) remained unchanged including data and

elements within Somali society coupled with classic theories of nationalism,<sup>15</sup> led to the belief that Somalia possesses all the qualities to be considered a strong nation-state.<sup>16</sup>

Following the state collapse and eruption of civil conflicts, primordialist approaches have restated the importance of tradition and traditional divisions within Somali society. In particular, it was argued that the paradigm of agnation was provided with a segmentary lineage system broken down into sub-clans which always constituted and fostered cleavages within the social structure. The paradigm of agnation was therefore interpreted as a source of both centripetal and centrifugal forces in constant tension between them as promoting unity and disintegration respectively. In understanding the eruption of civil conflicts, state-collapse and nation fragmentation, stress remained on blood-ties relations, and the array of alliances and rivalries dictated by the clan system.<sup>17</sup> From this perspective, the civil conflicts that erupted in the 1990s were seen as a continuation and expansion of traditional clan-based cleavages. As Lewis contended, with the eruption of civil conflicts, Somali clans were 'doing what they have always done - only with greater access to more lethal weapons.'<sup>18</sup>

Influenced by the works on the invention of tradition by Hobsbawm and Ranger,<sup>19</sup> a new generation of scholars adopted constructivist approaches to challenge the alleged homogeneity of Somali society arguing that Somalia, in the

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sources. For more details see the review of the latest edition of the volume: James Quirin, 'Clan and State', Book Review, *The Journal of African History*, 45:1 (2004).

<sup>15</sup> Ernest Renan 'What is a nation', in Geoff Eley, Ronald Grigor Suny (eds.), *Becoming National: A Reader*, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 41-55. The essay was originally presented in March 1882, at Sorbonne University, Paris.

<sup>16</sup> Saadia Touval, *Somali Nationalism. International Politics and the Drive for Unity in the Horn of Africa* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963). On the migratory expansion of Somali clans in the Horn of Africa, see: Ioan M. Lewis, 'The Somali Conquest of the Horn of Africa', *The Journal of African History*, 1(1960). On pastoralism and the clan system: Lewis, *A Pastoral Democracy*. David D. Laitin, Said S. Samatar, *Somalia: A Nation in Search of State*, (Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1987).

<sup>17</sup> Ioan M. Lewis, 'The Ogaden and the Fragility of Somali Segmentary Nationalism', *African Affairs*, 88:353 (1989); Hussein M. Adam, 'Somalia: a Terrible Beauty', pp. 168-89.

<sup>18</sup> Ioan M. Lewis, 'Doing Violence to Ethnography: Some Comments on Catherine Besteman's Distorted Reporting on Somalia', *Current Anthropology*, 13:1 (1998), p 101.

<sup>19</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

ways it was described by early historiographic trends, was an invention.<sup>20</sup> Constructivist approaches paid more attention to socioeconomic changes taking place in the twentieth century especially. New investigations dealt with issues such as class-formation, race and ethnicity, land divisions, class cleavages and racialization, cultural and socio-economic differences and the ethno-territorial divisions,<sup>21</sup> pointing out how these have played a considerable role in shaping clan identities and alliances.<sup>22</sup> In this way, the eruption of civil conflicts was understood as a by-product of conflicts based on class rather than clan.

Despite the increase of academic production on Somali studies, the violent dissolution of the nation-state hindered the collaboration among scholars leading to the crystallisation of the different theoretical positions.<sup>23</sup> In fact, attempts to bridge between the historiographic trends were made only recently. From this perspective, the recent collection of essays on Somali culture, society and politics, edited by Hoehne and Luling in 2010, calls for the development of new analytical approaches, drawing from different historiographies.<sup>24</sup> When tackling Somali studies, the editors maintain, scholars should consider both transformations taking place over the last

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<sup>20</sup> See the collection of essays in Ali J. Ahmed (ed.) *The Invention of Somalia* (Lawrenceville, N. J.: The Red Sea Press Inc., 1995).

<sup>21</sup> Abdillahi H. Jama, 'The Ethno-political Situation in the Horn of Africa', *The European Association of Somali Studies*, 1<sup>st</sup> Conference, 23rd-25th September 1993; Abdi M. Kusow, *Putting the Cart before the Horse: Contested Nationalism and the Crisis of Nation-State in Somalia* (Trenton N.J.: The Red Sea Press Inc., 1994); Abdi M. Kusow, 'The Genesis of the Somali Civil War: A New Perspective', *Northeast African Studies*, 1:1(New Series) (1994).

<sup>22</sup> See Mohamed H. Mukthar, 'Islam in Somali History: Fact and Fiction', in Ali J. Ahmed (ed.), *The Invention of Somalia*; Federico Battera, 'Le Confraternite Islamiche Somale di Fronte al Colonialismo (1890-1920): tra contrapposizione e collaborazione', *Africa* [Rome], 2 (1998); Rima Berns, 'Transformative Islam & Shifting Gender Role in the Somali Diaspora', in Kusow, *Putting the Cart before the Horse*; A. O. Mansur, 'The Nature of the Somali Clan System', in Ahmed (ed.) *The Invention of Somalia*.

<sup>23</sup> The exchange of opinions between Ioan Lewis and Catherine Besteman represented, perhaps, the bitterest moment of the debate. See Lewis, 'Doing Violence to Ethnography', along with Besteman's reply: Catherine Besteman, 'Primordialist Blindness: A Reply to I. M. Lewis', *Cultural Anthropology*, 13:1 (1998).

<sup>24</sup> 'In our perspective... the truth lies – as usual – in between.' Markus V. Hoehne, Virginia Luling, 'Introduction: Lewis and the Remaining Challenges in Somalis Studies' in Markus V. Hoehne, Virginia Luling (eds.), *Milk and Peace, Drought and War: Somali Culture, Society and Politics: Essays in Honour of I. M. Lewis*, (London: Hurst & Co., 2010), p. 7. In a review of the volume, Kapteijns notes that the editors failed to engage directly with the accomplishments, influences, critiques of the work of Ioan Lewis over the last decades. Lidwien Kapteijns, 'Review of Markus Hoehne and Viginia Luling 'Peace and Milk, Drought and War'', *The Journal of African History*, 52 (2011), pp. 273-4.

century, most notably the establishment of a centralised state and of a ‘new tradition of autocracy’ as part of the colonial legacy, and continuities with the past, particularly in relation to the clan system.<sup>25</sup>

However, no general consensus emerged in regard to the extent and ways in which colonial rule affected the development of post-colonial politics. According to an early interpretation, the experience of colonial rule did not modify the basic features of Somali pastoral society, or at least in Somaliland, although it introduced arbitrary partitions of the Horn of Africa.<sup>26</sup> Conversely, recent studies argued that, in fact, far from being accidental, colonial rule, territorial division, brutal occupation and its political economy had major impacts on Somali society. For instance, the works of Samatar underscored the ways in which pastoral economy and trade was transformed during the colonial occupation in Somaliland.<sup>27</sup> In advancing the model of ‘African suspended state’, Samatar and Samatar contented that the political economy of colonialism alienated and negatively affected relations between state and society.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, Menkhaus investigated the impacts of colonial plantations on systems of agricultural production in southern Somalia.<sup>29</sup> The experience of colonial rule has also been analysed in relation to the process of class formation in Somalia.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> The authors argue that a clan-based discourse remains a key feature of in Somali politics. From this perspective, tradition constitutes as a source of peace and reconstruction as, for instance, in Somaliland and Puntland. Hoehne, Luling, ‘Introduction’, in Hoehne, Luling (eds.), *Milk and Peace*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>26</sup> Lewis, *A Modern History*, especially chapters 2-6; Robert L. Hess, *Italian Colonialism in Somalia*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), especially chapter 8.

<sup>27</sup> Abdi I. Samatar, *The State and Rural Transformation in Northern Somalia, 1884-1986*, (Madison Wisconsin, the University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).

<sup>28</sup> Abdi I. Samatar, A. I. Samatar, ‘The Meterial Roots of the Suspended African State: Arguments from Somalia’, *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 25:4 (1987); Abdi I. Samatar, ‘Destruction of State and Society in Somalia: Beyond the Tribal Convention’, *Journal of Modern African Studies* 30:4 (1992); Ahmed I. Samatar, ‘The Curse of Allah: Civic Disembowelment and the Collapse of the State in Somalia’, in Ahmed I. Samatar (ed.), *The Somali Challenge*; see also Lidwien Kapteijns, ‘Gender Relations and Transformation of the Northern Somali Pastoral Tradition’, *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 28:2 (1995).

<sup>29</sup> Ken Menkhaus, ‘From Feast to Famine: Land and State in Somalia’s Lower Jubba Valley’, in Catherine Besteman, Lee V. Cassanelli (eds.), *The Struggle for Land in Southern Somalia: the War Behind the War* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996); Kathryn Craven, Ken Menkhaus, ‘Land Alienation and the Imposition of State Farms in the Lower Jubba Valley’ in Besteman and Cassanelli, *The Struggle for Land*.

<sup>30</sup> Charles Gesheker ‘Anti-Colonialism and Class Formation: The Eastern Horn of Africa before 1950’, *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 18:1 (1985); Ahmed I. Samatar, *Socialist Somalia: Rhetoric and Reality*, (Zed Books: London, 1988).

Recently, the dual, British and Italian, colonial rule has been investigated in relation to the end of union between Somalia and Somaliland. Where early historiographic approaches tended to overlook this duality, a growing body of literature argues that differential colonial rule with different legislations, militaries, bureaucracies, led to tense relations between the two regions, the neglect of Somaliland by a central government, contributing to eruption of civil war and cession in 1991.<sup>31</sup> More generally, colonial rule has been linked more directly to the dissolution of nation-state with the claim that imposed an alien model on Somali society.<sup>32</sup>

In spite of the renewed scholarly interest on the issues related to colonial legacies in Somalia, the process of decolonisation and the construction of the post-colonial state remain under-explored. This might be due to a combination of circumstances. From a disciplinary viewpoint, Somali studies have been conventionally characterised by a solid scholarly tradition of anthropological research which remains among the major trends today. On a different level, lack of historical research might be attributable to problems in accessing sources. In particular, the nature of archival materials is very fragmentary and required the knowledge of English and Italian languages. Moreover, due to the difficulties related to undertaking fieldwork in the area, scholarly attention is focusing on Somaliland<sup>33</sup> and Puntland<sup>34</sup> which are relatively more accessible to researchers. For all these reasons, recent attention on the process of decolonisation has been drawn to a reinterpretation of existing works on the topic rather than promoting new first-hand research.<sup>35</sup> However, this remains problematic due to the narrow focus adopted by the early historiography on Somali studies.

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<sup>31</sup> Ioan M. Lewis, *Understanding Somalia and Somaliland*, (London, Hurst and Co., 2008); Mark Bradbury, *Becoming Somaliland*, (London: Progressio, 2008).

<sup>32</sup> Anna Simons, 'Democratisation and Ethnic Conflict: the Kin Connection', *Nations and Nationalism*, 3:2 (1997), p. 274; Martin Doornbos, John Markakis, 'What Went Wrong in Somalia', *Review of African Political Economy*, 21:59 (1994), pp. 85-6.

<sup>33</sup> See Luca Ciabbari, *Dopo lo Stato. Storia e Antropologia della Ricostruzione Sociale nella Somalia Settentrionale* (Milan: Angeli, 2010).

<sup>34</sup> Markus Hoehne, 'Political Identity, Emerging State Structures and Conflict in Northern Somalia', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 44:3 (2006).

<sup>35</sup> See for instance Kapteijns, 'The Disintegration of Somalia'; Abdisalam M. Issa-Salwe, *The Collapse of the Somali State: The Impact of the Colonial Legacy*, (London: Haan, 1996).

By focusing on the extent to which Somali society was characterised by elements of 'homogeneity', early studies on Somali national politics and history devoted their attention to problems related to the process of nation-building and irredentism rather than to the processes of state building and unification. This trend was not confined to Somalia but reflected a general approach to African politics at the time. For instance, in a 1964 essay on the influences of western ideologies on African states, Thomas Hodgkin explored the concept of democracy as the means through which power was transferred from colonial rule to African elites. Within this context, great importance was given to the national project while the actual institutions of the system of power were discarded. In fact, the latter were seen as a mere means to achieve the national project.<sup>36</sup>

Similarly, Somali national politics have been analysed in relation to the national project of Greater Somalia. To be more precise, discussions centred on the nature of the cultural, historical, and sociological arguments which supported irredentism. Little attention was turned to the actual institutional structures that were built in support of the national project. For instance, the work by Laitin and Samatar on Somali post-independence national politics, the only comprehensive study on the topic, dedicated only four pages on pre-independence politics and the process of the making of the Somali state. Their assessment of the period suggested that independence represented an incomplete achievement as it led to the unification of only two out of five Somali speaking-regions.<sup>37</sup>

A lack of research characterised the period under investigation, the rule of the BMA and AFIS. Most works published on the topic have been produced by the BMA or AFIS, or by Ministry of Information whose accounts are embedded with a series of biases often linked to the wartime propaganda. AFIS rule has been object of analysis of a few works published by technicians who worked for the Italian

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<sup>36</sup> Thomas Hodgkin, 'The Relevance of 'Western' Ideas for the new African States', in Ronald Pennock (ed.), *Self-Government in Modernizing Nations*, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1964).

<sup>37</sup> Laitin, Samatar, *Somalia: A Nation*, pp. 65-8.



administration as Paolo Contini,<sup>38</sup> D'Antonio,<sup>39</sup> Giuseppe Costanzo.<sup>40</sup> Worth of consideration are the works by Karp on the political economy of AFIS<sup>41</sup> and the essays by Alphonse Castagno on political developments during AFIS.<sup>42</sup> Ioan Lewis' comprehensive work on Somali history dedicated little attention to the period.<sup>43</sup> Conversely, Angelo Del Boca provides a valuable analysis which is, however, penalized by the broader approach to investigate the development of Italian colonial rule in the Horn of Africa.<sup>44</sup> The recent works of Paolo Tripodi<sup>45</sup> and Antonio Morone<sup>46</sup> on Italian trusteeship in Somalia are exceptional and made an invaluable contribution to the discussions. However, both studies focus mainly on the Italian administration without including the period under the BMA.

As pointed out by Chris Allen when proposing a theoretical framework to the approach of African politics,<sup>47</sup> an investigation of the historical patterns of political development, especially the process of decolonisation, is instrumental for achieving a broader understanding of the trajectory of post-colonial politics. For the case of Somalia, such analysis needs to be grounded on first-hand research based on archival sources combined with oral memories. However, before addressing issues related to the methodology adopted by this research, it is necessary to contextualise the

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<sup>38</sup> Paolo Contini, *The Somali Republic: An Experiment in Legal Integration*, (London: Frank Cass, 1969).

<sup>39</sup> M. D'Antonio, *La Costituzione Somala: Precedenti Storici e Documenti Costituzionali*, (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1962).

<sup>40</sup> Giuseppe Costanzo, *Problemi Costituzionali della Somalia nella Preparazione all'Indipendenza (1957-1960)*, (Milan: Giuffrè, 1962).

<sup>41</sup> Mark Karp, *The Economics of Trusteeship in Somalia*, (Boston: Boston University Press, 1960).

<sup>42</sup> Alphonse A. Castagno, 'Somali Republic' in James S. Coleman, Carl G. Rosberg (eds.), *Political Parties and National Integration in Tropical Africa*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964); Alphonse A. Castagno, 'Somalia', *International Conciliation*, 522 (March, 1959).

<sup>43</sup> In fact, the author dedicates one chapter to the period under the BMA, and the disposition of former Italian colonies, and one chapter to AFIS rule. However, both chapters are extremely under-referenced and relied on a limited set of secondary sources. See Lewis, *A Modern History*, chapters 6-7.

<sup>44</sup> Del Boca's work on Italian colonialism in the Horn Africa comprises of four volumes organised according to a chronological order. For the phase under the BMA and AFIS rule see: Angelo Del Boca, *Gli Italiani in Africa Orientale: Nostalgia delle Colonie*, (Bari: Laterza, 1984).

<sup>45</sup> Paolo Tripodi, *The Colonial Legacy in Somalia*, (London: Macmillan Press, 1999); Paolo Tripodi, 'Back to the Horn: Italian Administration and Somalia's Troubled Independence', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 33:2/3 (1999).

<sup>46</sup> Antonio M. Morone, *L'Ultima Colonia: Come l'Italia è Tornata in Africa 1950-1960*, (Bari: Laterza, 2011).

<sup>47</sup> Chris Allen, 'Understanding African Politics', *Review of African Political Economy*, 22:65 (1995).

research themes and to discuss some theoretical issues related to the study of the process of decolonisation in Somalia.

## 1.4 The decolonisation process and the making of the post-colonial state in Somalia

The themes discussed in this research are situated within the broader historical context of the process of decolonisation in Africa. It is possible to define this process as the series of actions and circumstances that led to the relinquishment of the empires and to the establishment of independent African states. Conventionally, the occurrence of the Second World War is seen as a watershed within this process, a catalyst for ideological, political and socioeconomic changes.<sup>48</sup> Most notably, in the 1940s a new international scenario emerged that was characterised by the rise, as a world power, of the United States which had different imperial interests. This scenario came to be subject to the new economic imperatives and strategic policies dictated by the Cold War, and somewhat hostile to European colonial empires. Moreover, the period was also marked by the establishment of the UN which assumed a less-benevolent international attitude towards colonialism. At the same time, starting with the mid-1940s, national elections in Europe resulted in leftist governments promoting progressive plans with regards to the colonial possessions.<sup>49</sup> In addition to this, the formulation soon after the war of a Pan-Africanist ideology, of which several nationalist leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah were the driving force,

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<sup>48</sup> The process of decolonisation has been the object of debate of numerous studies. See for instance: John G. Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation: The Retreat from Empire in the Post-War World* (London: Macmillan, 1988); John G. Darwin, *The End of the British Empire: The Historical Debate* (London: Blackwell, 1991); John D. Hargreaves, *Decolonization in Africa* (London: Longman, 1988) R. F. Holland, *European Decolonization, 1945-1961: An Introductory Survey* (London: Macmillan, 1985); Wyndraeth H. Morris-Jones and George Fischer (eds.), *Decolonisation and After: the British and French Experience* (London: Frank Cass, 1980); Prosser Gifford and W. Roger Louis (eds.), *The Transfer of Power in Africa: Decolonization 1940-1960* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982) Prosser Gifford and W. Roger Louis (eds.), *Decolonization and African Independence: the Transfer of Power, 1960-1980* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

<sup>49</sup> For a useful summary of major trends in scholarly debate on decolonisation in Africa see Robert Tignor, *Capitalism and Nationalism at the End of Empire: State and Business in Decolonizing Egypt, Nigeria and Kenya, 1945-63*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), chapter 1.

contributed to the laying down a common struggle against colonial rule throughout the globe.<sup>50</sup>

The effects of the Second World War on African economies and societies fostered a series of pressures coming from local associations, trade unions, nationalist movements starting in the 1940s. Due to the systematic subordination of African economies to the war effort, an increased demand of African raw materials and the scarce availability of manufactured goods during the war-time created a context of low morale and social dissatisfaction in which issues like labour became central in the colonies. In the 1940s, an increasing number of African men and women began a wave of strikes in the French and British colonies, especially in West Africa. Although, the strikers were brought together by demands for socioeconomic improvements, African nationalists were able to catalyse these pressures in order to advance their quest for independence.<sup>51</sup> The ways in which colonial rulers responded to pressures from below marked a shift in colonial policies that led to the adoption of more progressive policies of dominion. Starting from the 1940s, this shift was marked by the introduction of new schemes and plans that centred on the concept of development.<sup>52</sup>

Recently, Paul Nugent illustrated how the new socio-economic and political scenario emerging from the Second World War brought the contradiction at the heart of the colonial project into public display.<sup>53</sup> From this perspective, he adopted the idea of ‘colonial contradiction’ of Homi Bhabha – the tension inherent to the colonial discourse which sought to replicate itself in the colonised but refuse to acknowledge

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<sup>50</sup> Most notably, two events, the Pan-African Federation in 1944 and the Pan-African Congress held in Manchester in 1945, were central in the ideation of the Pan-African ideology. A. Ajala, *Pan-Africanism: Evolution, Progress and Prospects* (London: A. Deuthsch, 1973). On the Pan-Africanist anti-colonial ideology see R. Makonnes, *Pan-Africanism from Within* (Nairobi, London: Oxford University Press, 1973); R. W. Walters, *Pan-Africanism in the African Diaspora: an Analysis of Modern Afrocentric Political Movements* (Detroit: Wayne State, 1997); V. B. Thompson, *Africa and Unity: the Evolution of Pan-Africanism* (London: Longmans, 1969); J. A. Langely, *Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in West Africa, 1900-1945: a Study in Ideology and Social Classes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973).

<sup>51</sup> Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), especially chapter 10.

<sup>52</sup> Frederick Cooper, *Africa Since 1940: The Past of the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), chapter 3.

<sup>53</sup> Paul Nugent, *African Since Independence*, (Houndmills, UK: Palgrave, 2004), chapter 1.

this replication – to indicate the tension that arose around the exercise of colonial dominion.<sup>54</sup> On the one hand, this discourse was justified by the ‘efforts’ made by colonial rule of improving ‘Africans’ interests’; on the other, it perpetuated Africans’ dependency to colonial rule by reducing these efforts to the lowest level. If colonial powers managed to keep this tension at bay until the late 1930s, the outbreak and the effects of the Second World War brought the colonial contradiction to its culmination. In this sense, the post-war context was characterised by a series of promises made by the colonial powers during the conflict under which African colonies were to be rewarded for their instrumental contribution to the war effort. Once expectations were raised, colonial powers were forced to face and address the demands for reforms emerging from the post-war socioeconomic pressures which eventually led to the relinquishment of African empires.<sup>55</sup>

A general consensus among scholars indicates that the interaction between pressures from below and initiative from above came to assume a special significance within the process of the decolonisation. This interaction determined modes, time and patterns for dismantling the empires, relinquishing power and granting independence. Its intensity and features varied from case to case indicating that decolonisation was the result of a constant dialogue, more or less violent, between colonial rulers and African demands. As Tony Kirk-Greene suggested this dialectic relation resembled collective bargaining:

Like a typical trade union negotiation, the process [of decolonisation] was a two-way affair, of concession in response to pressure.<sup>56</sup>

It was this interaction that ultimately defined ‘a certain kind of decoloni[s]ation’ by promoting a certain potential future for African politics while precluding other possibilities.<sup>57</sup>

This research centres on the investigation of the ‘two-way affair’ in Somalia, specifically looking at the interplay between the politics of nationalism and

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<sup>54</sup> Homi Bhabha quoted in Nugent, *African Since Independence*, pp. 11-13.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., pp. 19-20.

<sup>56</sup> Tony Kirk-Greene, ‘Decolonisation in British Africa’, *History Today*, 42:1(1992), p. 47.

<sup>57</sup> Cooper, *African Since 1940*, p. 66.

decolonisation starting with the Second World War. This is not a simple task. In many ways, the decolonisation of Somalia followed a peculiar trajectory mainly due to the fact that the Horn of Africa was the scene of the struggle between the armies of two colonial powers, Great Britain and Italy. The most striking effects of the conflict were the defeat of the Italians, the establishment of a temporary military occupation, the BMA, and the placing of Somalia under a 10-year UN trusteeship in 1950. Due to the change of regime in 1941, Somalia – together with Italian colonies, Eritrea, Libya – ceased to be, technically speaking, a colony. In fact, especially between 1941 and 1950, when the administrative future of former Italian colonies was undecided pending the end of the war and further decisions of the UN, the colonial status of Somalia was officially ‘suspended’.<sup>58</sup>

The fact that the nature and features of the BMA were never really defined – the BMA was a military occupation within a colonial setting – contributed to create a somewhat grey area within which the interaction between different communities was articulated. Investigating these relations can be problematic. In particular, issues arise around the nature of the interplay between the military occupiers, the former colonial masters and the quasi-colonial subjects. From this perspective, the main challenge for historians of the 1940s Somalia is to look beyond the series of biases and myths which characterised the Allied wartime propaganda. The features of these myths need to be addressed because they came to influence our understanding and perception of the time as their echoes still resonate in contemporary literature today.

The Allied propaganda reflected the alliances of the War. Italy entered the Second World War as a member of the Axis Coalition and hence against the United Kingdom.<sup>59</sup> In June 1940, Italian troops attacked and occupied British Somaliland. Soon after, in November 1940, the British launched their counter-attack and, within a

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<sup>58</sup> Trevaskis refers to Eritrea under the BMA as a ‘colony in transition’. I prefer the expression ‘suspended colony’ because the colonial status of former Italian colonies was not fully addressed before the 1945 Peace Conference in San Francisco. Thus, following the Italian defeat in 1941, their status came to be suspended. See G. K. N. Trevaskis, *Eritrea: A Colony in Transition: 1941-52*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1960).

<sup>59</sup> In Horn of Africa, the war began with the Italian aggression against Ethiopia in 1935.

few months, defeated the Italians in the Horn of Africa.<sup>60</sup> As a result, a temporary military occupation under the British, the BMA, came to administer former Italian colonies. However, its nature remained ambiguously embedded with the aims of the Allied liberation campaign – the defeat of fascism – and the colonial setting in which it operated involving the use of structures of former colonial (fascist) rule and the reliance on personnel (both colonial and military) in use in the British empire. Therefore, while the BMA was not a colonial regime, its institutional framework resembled its former colonial setting.

This tension was reflected in the Allied wartime propaganda of ‘the international fight against Nazism’ and ‘the liberation campaign from fascism’ adopted by the BMA in Somalia. Although this discourse clearly indicated the aim of the campaign – the defeat of fascism – its usage in the context of a ‘suspended’ colony became problematic because it did not specify what forms of rule would have replaced the fascist regime, and what prospect awaited the former colonies and local communities. However, due to the provisional nature of the BMA, this tension was never fully addressed by the British Government. For instance, one of the first accounts of the operations published by the Ministry of Information was entitled *The First to Be Freed*, highlighting the role of liberators of the BMA in the Horn of Africa.<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, the Allied propaganda of ‘freeing’ the Horn of Africa from fascism came at odds with the nature of military occupation. In fact, if the BMA differed from previous colonial rule, and by defeating fascism ‘freed’ Somalia, it was less clear what kind of administration the BMA represented. In other words, whether former Italian colonies came to be ‘freed’ from fascism in 1941, the presence of a military occupation by a colonial power did not make them ‘liberated’.

The uncertainties related to the features of the BMA fostered a series of myths regarding the relations with the colonial subjects, and the nature of British policies that came to be very influential among some scholars of Somali politics and history. Establishing the criteria through which dealing with the Italians as enemies,

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<sup>60</sup> For an account of the operations see James Rennel Rodd, *British Military Administration of Occupied Territories in Africa During the Years 1941-1947* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1948).

<sup>61</sup> K.C. Gandar Dower, *The First to Be Freed: The Record of British Military Administration in Eritrea and Somalia, 1941-1943*, (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1944).

with the Somalis as ‘suspended’ colonised, and at the same time maintaining racial hierarchies, became a difficult task for the BMA. The relation between the British and the Italians was a matter of particular concern to the British policy especially due to considerable amount of Italians living in the colonies.<sup>62</sup> In June 1941, the BMA was set up in *Somalia Italiana* under the name OETA – Occupied Enemy’s Territory Administration. Consequently, Italian soldiers and officials were made prisoners of war and temporarily moved to special camps located along the Somali coasts before being shipped to Kenya, India, South Africa or Great Britain. It was also suggested to set a special naval service to repatriate Italian civilians. Although the majority of Italians was evacuated from the Horn of Africa within a couple of years, a certain number of Italians, technically speaking citizens of a hostile power, decided to remain in the colonies. As chapter two discussed in details, due to various movement of people, this number changed dramatically over the years, reaching possibly 12,000 Italians in Mogadishu in 1942, circa a third of the total population.

Additionally, the shifting war alliances contributed to make British policy even more confused. In September 1943, as a result of a change of regime, Italy was split in two: in the south, a new-formed Italian Government signed an armistice with the Allied forces and joined the Allied coalition; in northern Italy, a new fascist government was formed on the Nazi side. Similarly, the Italian community in *Somalia Italiana* divided between the ones who were supportive of the pro-Allied government, the ones who were supportive of fascism, and the ones who did not express preferences. The British policy was redrafted accordingly but with some difficulties. On the one hand, instructions sent from London to the BMA prescribed to remove the word ‘Enemy’ from the acronym OETA that became OTA –Occupied Territory Administration. On the other, the War Office, in charge of the local administration, recommended that an ‘aloof attitude’ to be assumed towards the Italian communities in Somalia.

What was meant by an ‘aloof attitude’ remained unclear to most of the BMA in Somalia and generated a great deal of confusion on how to deal with Italians and,

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<sup>62</sup> In 1940, there were possibly 60,000 Italian civilians in the Horn of Africa. See Angelo Del Boca, *Gli Italiani in Africa Orientale: La Caduta dell’Impero*, (Laterza: Bari, 1982), pp.556-66.

because of that, with the Somalis. On an official level the Italians were allied but on a practical level they were not to be trusted. Here is an extract that expresses the problematic:

The status of co-belligerency does not mean that Italy is henceforth to be reckoned as one of the United Nations or is to be admitted by the British and America Government to their counsels as an ally. It means that the Italian Government will be fighting the same enemy, and that the United Nations support is for that immediate and limited purpose only.<sup>63</sup>

Shifting war alliances between British and Italian governments affected the perceptions of the time especially with regards to the British-Somali relations. Accordingly, if the British and Italians were enemies, it was implicitly suggested that a certain bond existed between the occupiers and the ‘suspended’ colonised, and that the British considered the Somalis as ‘allies’. Due to a certain degree of hostility of the BMA towards the Italian communities, the British were somehow considered to be fond of the Somalis.<sup>64</sup> From this perspective, the narrative adopted by the well-known Somalist scholar Ioan Lewis in his comprehensive study on Somali history is very telling:

To understand the atmosphere in Somalia at this time [i.e. during the BMA], and the nature of the relations between British officials and Somali, it has to be remembered that the new rulers saw themselves as liberators from fascist oppression and to a considerable extent were so received. Indeed, the generally friendly reception accorded to them reinforced the Administration’s tendency to regard the Somali as allies against the Italians. And many British officials made no secret of their admiration for Somalis and contempt for the defeated Italians. Hence there was from the beginning a considerable bond of sympathy between

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<sup>63</sup> These were part of the instructions sent to the BMA in Somalia: Author unknown, ‘Relations with the Italians in General and with Fascists’, 9<sup>th</sup> November (presumably) 1943; in ‘Internal Security: Notes on Situation in Kenya and Somalia’, The National Archives (TNA), War Office (WO) 230/319.

<sup>64</sup> This view was shared by members of the Italian community in Somalia as well. See for instance, the position adopted by Antonia Bullotta in a biased account of the British military occupation in Somalia: Antonia Bullotta, *La Somalia Sotto Due Bandiere*, (Milan: Garzanti, 1949), p. 122. This discourse influenced the perspective on colonial rule in British Somaliland as well. In a recent interview, Ioan Lewis, who conducted research in Somaliland, including trips to Somalia in the 1950s, contended that the British colonial administration was generally ‘pro-Somalis’. Charles Gesheker, ‘Interview with Professor Ioan Lewis at His Home in London’, *Bildhaan: An International Journal of Somali Studies*, 1(2001), pp. 58-9.



the rulers and the Somali public which, in the liberal currents of opinion of the times, found expression in a strong and quite explicit pro-Somali policy.<sup>65</sup>

In investigating the emergence of Somali nationalist organisations under the BMA, the thesis attempts to challenge this perspective. There are several reasons for doing so. An alleged bond of sympathy between the occupiers and Somali subjects conceals the racial-based and patronising features of the British rule. Under the BMA, Somalis were not treated equal to Europeans or spared of colonial arrogance and prejudice. Racial discourse continued to be central to British rule. In fact, the presence of a white enemy community caused a further hierarchisation of the military regime. Although the nature of the BMA remained vague, its social stratification was never questioned. As expressed by a British writer of the time, if the Italians were considered ‘an allegedly hostile European race’, the Somalis were believed to be ‘difficult to deal with even at his friendliest’.<sup>66</sup>

On a different level, considering the BMA as characterised by a ‘pro-Somali’ policy hinders our appreciation of Somali nationalist organisations. Conventionally, the adoption by the BMA of partially liberal policies which allowed the formation of political organisations previously forbidden and the 1946 British proposal to create a Greater Somalia<sup>67</sup> were considered as proofs of British support to Somali national agenda.<sup>68</sup> This discourse is misleading. By stressing the well-disposed intentions of the BMA towards Somali communities and political organisations, the British role in the emergence of Somali political movements is over-stressed to the detriment of Somali-rooted capacity to propose and carry out political choices. Scholars such as Lewis, Touval conventionally assume that due to the British approval of Somali nationalism and irredentist aspirations, the BMA ‘provided during the early 1940’s guidance and help to the inexperienced Somali politicians’ in the process of creation

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<sup>65</sup> Lewis, *A Modern History of the Somali*, p. 120.

<sup>66</sup> Gandar Dower ‘British Military Administration in Eritrea and Somalia’, undated (likely to be produced in 1943), in ‘Eritrea and Italian Somaliland’, TNA, Foreign Office (FO) 371/41519. A later version of the report was published by the Ministry of Information: Gandar Dower, *First to Be Freed*.

<sup>67</sup> Bevin’s proposal advanced the unification of all Somali-speaking regions with the exception of Djibouti.

<sup>68</sup> Estelle Sylvia Pankhurst, *Ex-Italian Somaliland* (London: Watts & Co., 1951), especially chapter 17.

of nationalist parties.<sup>69</sup> Conversely, the thesis argues that the most striking character of nationalist movements in the 1940s was a self-help movement which appropriated elements of Somali culture in order to promote a horizontal structure and links of cooperation and solidarity. Due to the limited resources of the BMA, it was this movement which fostered a series of socio-economic activities proving a source of inspiration to Somali nationalists.

Additionally, imperial interests in the area should be not discarded. Assuming a bond of sympathy between British and Somali communities overshadows the British (colonial) policies in the area. As the thesis discusses, throughout the 1940s the administrative future of Somalia became a matter of debate of the UN. These discussions were influenced by the competing alliances dictated by the Cold War. As a result, the Great Powers, France, Great Britain, the Soviet Union of the United States, advanced their interests in the Horn Africa. The British support to the project of Greater Somalia reflected the intention to control the regions via an international mandate. In fact, the British claim on Greater Somalia was seen as a legitimate reward for the British role played during the war and in particular during the liberation campaign to 'free' the Horn of Africa from the fascist occupation. This position was made clear by the then Foreign Secretary, Ernst Bevin in 1946 when replying to the Soviet Union's Foreign Minister Molotov who criticised the British attempt to encourage the creation a Greater Somalia:

But what attracted M. Molotov's criticism was, I am sure, that I suggested that Great Britain should be made the administrating authority [of Greater Somalia]. Was this unreasonable? In the first place we were surrendering a Protectorate comparable in size to the area we hoped that Ethiopia would contribute. Secondly, it was a British force, mainly East African and South African force which bore the main brunt of restoring the independence of Ethiopia and of putting the Emperor back on his throne after several years' sanctuary in this country. We do not seek gratitude on that account but I think it right to express surprise that our proposals should have met with such unjustified criticism. After all, when we were defeating Italy in East Africa, Britain was open to invasion and

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<sup>69</sup> Touval, *Somali Nationalism*, p. 86. So Lewis: 'The British Military Administration naturally favoured aspirations which were opposed to the traditional dividing forces in Somali society and which were on the side of progress. With the assistance of the British Political Officer at Mogadishu, the new trends were marshalled together and moved towards the formation of a youth club [i.e. the Somali Youth League].' Lewis, *A Pastoral Democracy*, p. 306.

we were fighting alone. I hope the deputies at the Paris conference [i.e. Peace Conference] will now consider a greater Somaliland more objectively.<sup>70</sup>

Although during the BMA the colonial status of Somalia was ‘suspended’, imperial interests were considerable. As Barnes points out although it was discarded officially in 1946, the idea of Greater Somalia remained a recurrent and influential theme within British policy and policy-making until 1948.<sup>71</sup> For this reason, the BMA implemented different policies in the former Italian colonies: if freedom of association was partially granted in Somalia as soon as 1943, in Eritrea, where the British interests were limited and of a different nature, political organisations were banned until the late 1940s.<sup>72</sup> Strong imperial interests also led a late withdrawal of the BMA from the Ogaden and Haud and RA with major consequences on the development of local politics, as discussed in chapters two and six.

In understanding the development of local politics, the research makes an attempt to explore the socio-economic effects of the military occupation. Further problems arise in relation to the series of myths and biases which have characterised the historical accounts of 1940s Somalia. As pointed out by Michel Foucault, it is a common procedure for the winners of a certain conflict to rely on propaganda in order to affirm their political dominion over the enemies.<sup>73</sup> Shaped by war alliances, this discourse adopted a clear-cut distinction between the wrong/bad side and the good/right side, between the Nazi-fascist and the Allied coalitions. Reports of the war and occupation were narrated through the lens of this simplistic discourse while the effects and reactions to both the conflicts and military occupation were downplayed.

Propaganda was used by the BMA to legitimate its rule and eventually produced distorted views of the nature of British administration and of relations between the Somali subjects and military occupiers. By stressing their role of

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<sup>70</sup> Ernst Bevin in the House of Commons, 4<sup>th</sup> June 1946, quoted in Touval, *Somali Nationalism*, p. 79.

<sup>71</sup> Cedric Barnes, ‘The Somali Youth League, Ethiopian Somalis and the Greater Somalia Idea, circa 1946-48’, *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 1:2 (2007), p. 279.

<sup>72</sup> For the case of Eritrea see Ruth Iyob, *The Eritrean Struggle for Independence. Domination, Resistance, Nationalism 1941-1993*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 61-81.

<sup>73</sup> Michel Foucault, “*Society Must Be Defended*”: *Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76* (Mauro Bertani, Alessandro Fontana eds.) (translated by David Macey), (London: Allen Lane, 2003), chapter 2.

‘liberators’ of African colonies from fascism, British accounts of the operations depicted the occupation of Somalia the by-product of an ‘easy’ and quick campaign. Accordingly, the enemy’s army is often disorganised, military resistance is limited, Somali populations are either described as passive or welcoming the operations. Similar tones characterised the accounts of the operation of the 22<sup>nd</sup> East African Infantry Brigade, advancing from Kenya into Somalia that, although admitting to have encountered some opposition, ridiculed the degree of the conflicts:

[...]opposition was never very serious, and, though at various times there was a considerable amount of enemy fire, casualties were ridiculously [sic!] light.<sup>74</sup>

By pursuing a demystification of the enemy, this rhetoric downplayed the socioeconomic effects of the war and the military occupation . As chapter three discusses in details, this discourse led to dismissing the effects of the military occupation and the nature of resistance to this occupation and the extent to which this affected political development. Acts of resistance taking place across the regions were labelled as ‘tribal’ and so was the political front which backed the Italians in opposition to the BMA before the UN. The thesis deals with the issue of Somali support to Italian rule illustrating how this consent often concealed dissent to the military occupation.

The process of decolonisation in Somalia became even more peculiar following the UN decision to place the ‘suspended’ colony under a 10-year trusteeship administration ruled by Italy from 1950. It is important to note that the UN decision represented a somewhat progressive trend within the context of colonial Africa. Where at the time most African nationalists and social organisations were confronting colonial rule to advance their quest for self-government and independence, the modes and terms of Somali independence had already been defined in 1949. The thesis illustrates how the features of the trusteeship administration affected the making of the Somali state. Despite the fact that the colonial status of Somalia was replaced by the one of ‘trust territory’, the process of

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<sup>74</sup> Kenneth H. Clarke, ‘Reports on the operations of 22<sup>nd</sup> East African Infantry Brigade between Jan 23<sup>rd</sup> and Jun 21<sup>st</sup> 1941, during which the Brigade advanced from the Garissa area to Gomma.’ Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies, at Rhodes House, Oxford, MSS. Afr. s. 1077.

state-crafting shared similarities with decolonising programmes undertaken elsewhere in colonial Africa. This circumstance makes possible to investigate the extent to which the UN programme of democratisation shaped Somalia's patterns of political development. In this way, the research engages with the scholarly debate that focuses on the ways in which the colonial states left their successors with enduring and negative legacies.

Starting in the 1990s, a debate in Africa studies began to investigate the relations between the legacies of the colonial state and poor performances in social, economic, and political fields of post-colonial states. In a comparative study, Crawford Young indicates how the highly exploitative character of the colonial state produced a series of pernicious legacies.<sup>75</sup> As colonial dominion had two main aims, i.e. the extraction of local resources and control over borders, Young contends that state structures and institutions were conceived to support state self-interests exclusively. The coercive features of this ruling system prevented the consolidation of a strong and healthy civil society which would challenge state self-interests and counterbalance its power.

In capturing the disruptive character of this state system, Young makes use of the image of Bula Matari, the crusher of rocks – the nickname given to Henry Morton Stanley and his 1880s expedition into Congolese interiors to set up colonial dominion.

Over time, as the new state on whose construction Stanley had surreptitiously embarked ceased to be his personal undertaking as Leopoldian emissary and burgeoned into an impersonal embodiment of oppressive European power, Bula Matari came to represent this intrusive alien authority more generally. The metaphor captured well the crushing, relentless force of the emerging colonial state in Africa.<sup>76</sup>

In opposition to Young's image of colonial state as an omnipotent and persistently hostile *deus ex machina*, other scholars suggest that in fact colonial state achieved little effective dominion over society and remained overall weak and

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<sup>75</sup> Crawford Young *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective* (London: Yale University Press, 1994).

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

fragile.<sup>77</sup> In this sense, it was pointed out that within the broader history of African society, colonial rule represented a brief digression whose importance should be not overestimated but linked to particular time and circumstances. Moreover, scholars suggested that Young's image of Bula Matari implies that colonial rule followed clear plans of dominion. Conversely, it has been argued that these plans were constantly subject to negotiations with specific, local circumstances testifying a rather limited power of states against local social forces.<sup>78</sup> A correlated argument is that client-relations between African elites and colonial rulers were central to enduring state dominion. From this perspective, it has been argued that the role played by elites was not simply one of collusion but that of conscious actors of 'extraverted' patterns of colonial and post-colonial politics.<sup>79</sup>

Although these critiques posit serious questions around the effective power of colonial state-system embodied by Bula Matari, there are aspects of colonial legacy worth close consideration. First, the state has to be considered together with its governing bodies and structures rather than taking it as an abstract concept. As pointed out by Cooper, African states emerged as successors of colonial states and by default inherited its ruling apparatus made of institutional and governing bodies, bureaucracies, legislative system, militaries and geographical border divisions.<sup>80</sup> This apparatus necessarily impacted and conditioned post-independent states during the historical phase following independence. For this reason, an investigation of the late colonial period, starting roughly with the Second World War, is important to understand what kind of practical features were established and inherited by post-colonial successors. From this perspective, the late colonialism assumed particular significance because it coincided with the ideation and implementation of a series of policies and development plans imposed by colonial rule in response to African demands which shaped infrastructural apparatus of post-colonial state.

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<sup>77</sup> Jean François Bayart, Stephen Ellis, Béatrice Hibou, *The Criminalization of the State in Africa*, (Oxford: James Currey, 1999); Patrick Chabal, Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument* (Oxford: James Currey, 1999).

<sup>78</sup> Bruce J. Berman, 'The Perils of Bula Matari: Constraint and Power in the Colonial State', *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 31:3, (1997); Bill Freund 'Democracy and the Colonial Heritage in Africa: Revisiting Mamdani's *Citizen and Subject*', *Left History*, 7:1 (2000).

<sup>79</sup> Bayart, Ellis, Hibou, *The Criminalization of the State*.

<sup>80</sup> Cooper, *African Since 1940*, p. 156.

By examining the concept of Trusteeship System, the thesis underscores a tension between the aims and scopes of the international mandate and the modes and practices through which the process of democratisation was enhanced. Moreover, it is illustrated how the imposition of a Trusteeship System in *Somalia Italiana* affected the interaction between the trust power and the Somali demands by reducing the space of political action for Somali nationalists. As the System scheduled a clear and fixed programme of decolonisation towards independence, which was granted in 1949 already, the range of political actions and possibilities for Somali nationalists came to be very limited. Due to the fact that the transfer of power was already scheduled and plans for self-government drafted, a dialectic interaction between AFIS and nationalists did not evolve properly. In fact, on the one hand AFIS backed by the UN became less susceptible to demands and requests from below, on the other, Somali nationalists were encapsulated within a very restricted political space which forced them to accept terms and conditions imposed by AFIS and wait for the termination of international administration. This circumstance affected the political line of political parties which began to engage in dialogue with AFIS and, as a result, increased the competition among different parties.

Another aspect related to colonial legacy has been underscored by Mahmood Mamdani. His arguments suggest that colonial rule was exercised through a 'decentralised despotism' which divided among urban and rural domains, civic and ethnic ties. In this way, it was established a 'bifurcated state' with dual governing bodies and tribally organised local authority and a distinct division between 'tribal' and 'modern', 'subjects' and 'citizens'.<sup>81</sup> As a result of the decolonisation process, colonial state and its structures were 'deracialised', marking transfer of powers from European colonial rulers to African leaders and politicians, but remained essentially 'tribal' and thus embedded with despotic features of their predecessors. By inheriting colonial governing bodies and ruling systems, post-colonial states inherited a culture of dominion based on clear-cut divide between structures of power and mass of population. More recently, Paul Nugent made use of Mamdani's theorization of

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<sup>81</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of the Late Colonialism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996).

‘decentralised despotism’ to investigate how the process of decolonisation involved a multiple transfers of power - from colonial officials to African politicians, and from chiefs to elective leaders – indicating a tension between modernity and tradition proper of colonial rule and post-colonial state system.<sup>82</sup>

In investigating the transfer of power in Somalia, the thesis underscores the existence of a similar tension between the modern goals of the trusteeship system, aiming at democratisation, and the methods adopted to achieve these goals which relied on traditional, or what was taken as traditional, social institutions. In particular, the aims and scopes of the trusteeship system and the process of state-craft, investigated in chapter four, have been analysed by looking at the establishment of representative bodies, deliberative assemblies and electoral procedures. It will be illustrated how this process produced a state system based on a distorted model of nation-state which was, in fact, ambivalently embedded with modernist elements and outlooks and traditional practices and ties.

Another important aspect of colonial legacy which is the subject of analysis in the thesis concerns the historical trajectory contributing to the failure of African states to perform their political and economic functions properly. From this perspective, Frederick Cooper elaborated the concept of the ‘gatekeeper state’ to indicate the post-colonial state system based on restrictive channels to control economic resources and characterised by politics of exclusion and of clientage for its control. As successors of the colonial states, post-colonial states derived their legitimacy from international recognition but lacked internal recognition and failed to extend their dominion inwards effectively. In this way, post-colonial states were created as ‘gates’ through which revenues from taxes, customs and foreign aid are collected and distributed. Since independence, post-colonial politics have been reduced to conflicts among economic and political competitors for accessing the resources controlled by the gatekeeper state.<sup>83</sup>

As highlighted in chapter five and six of the thesis, the conflicts for controlling the state became a central theme of Somali politics after the introduction

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<sup>82</sup> Nugent, *African Since Independence*, chapter 4.

<sup>83</sup> Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, chapter 7.



of self-government in 1956. It illustrates how these conflicts expanded and included competitors from Somalia and Somaliland affecting the process of unification of the two. Furthermore, it is argued how politics of exclusion and clientage assumed a particular significance following the introduction of self-government when Somali-led governments took direct control over domestic issues such as the appointment of Somalis to institutional posts, i.e., the ‘Somalisation’ of the state. In this way, political leadership was put in the exclusive position to decide who would be included to key posts before independence and when the process of state-craft was still evolving. Moreover, as the decolonisation plan put great emphasis on electoral procedures and elections, political leadership was forced to rely constantly to backing from electorate and, in order to secure this support, it resorted to politics of clientage and negotiation of key posts with members of the opposition. Affecting both state-building and national project, the process of ‘verticalisation’ of Somali political space reached a completion with the unification of Somalia and Somaliland in 1960.

## 1.5 Defining nationalism

A core theme examined by the thesis is the emergence and proliferation of modern nationalism<sup>84</sup> and nationalist movements in Somalia in the 1940s. Scholarly debates over nations and nationalisms have produced a vast body of literature characterised by different schools of thought. However, it is possible to state that the term nation indicates a community consisting of individuals who share common cultural elements and feel to be one. In this sense, nationalism is a doctrine that legitimates the existence of nations. This doctrine assumes that the world is divided into nations, that each person belongs to a nation or has a nationality, and that each nation has a proper past, a foreseeable future and a defined territory.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> By ‘modern nationalism’ I indicate the national movements that emerged in the 1940s in the Somali-speaking regions.

<sup>85</sup> Athena S. Leoussi (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Nationalism* (London: Transaction Publishers, 2001). Although, the concept of nationalism has been studied by different disciplines and methods, no ‘integrate theory of the politics of nationalism’ have emerged, and differently from other ‘isms’ nationalism did not produce its own thinkers. Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and nationalism since 1780. Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) p.7.

Commonly understood as a modern phenomenon that consolidated with the rise of the modern state and democracy,<sup>86</sup> the notion of nationalism provides the basis for the concept of nation-state. The latter indicates a state –understood as Weber’s definition of ‘an agency within society which possesses the monopoly of legitimate violence’- which claims legitimate sovereignty over a nation. Therefore, within the context of a nation-state the physical borders of the nation are identical to the geographical borders over which the state exerts its legitimacy.<sup>87</sup>

Benedict Anderson contends that the relations between nations and certain given sociological and cultural conditions –as language, ethnicity or religion- is not predetermined but subject to a ‘process of imagination’. In this sense, a certain community consisting of individuals who share common cultural elements is not necessarily a nation, but becomes a nation when these individuals resort to a process of imagination to create their vision of the nation.<sup>88</sup> The process of imagination assumes a special important role in the formulation of nations because it represents time, modes and features through which cultural elements, as language, religion, history, are appropriated by a certain community who seeks to identify and distinguish itself. Accordingly, ‘attitudinal boundaries’ are created to differentiate an imagined community from others and to include and exclude its imagined members.<sup>89</sup> This process represents the ways through which a certain community is kept together by a common sense of belonging and the reasons why its members, who do not know each other, feel or wish to be one. As a product of ‘cultural artefacts’, nation remains, Anderson maintains, essentially a ‘political imagined community’:

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<sup>86</sup> John A. Hall, ‘Nationalisms: Classified and Explained’, *Dedalus*, 122:3 (1993), p. 17.

<sup>87</sup> It is conventionally held that Ernest Gellner’s theory is the first approach to define the concept of nationalism systematically. Considering nationalism a political principle, Gellner argues that its origins are rooted in the development of the industrial society. Relying on Weberian concept of the state, Gellner contends that nationalism emerges only within a state context as reaction to the state or to the forms in which it operates. Ernst Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983) p. 3.

<sup>88</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

<sup>89</sup> Fredrik Barth (ed.) *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1969).

It is *imagined* because the members of the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.<sup>90</sup>

In spite of the fact that process of national imagination is based on cultural elements, nations and nationalisms are intrinsically embedded with political aspirations and purposes. In fact, some scholars have argued that nationalism, as a political principle, emerges only within a state context either as a reaction to the state or to the forms in which the state operates.<sup>91</sup> As Hall posits it, the nationalist sentiment arises when people who feel they belong to the same nation believe that its national principle has been neglected.<sup>92</sup> On a similar note, Breuilly suggests that nationalist organisations can be understood as ‘political movements seeking or exercising state power and justifying such action with nationalist arguments.’<sup>93</sup> These organisations pursued at constructing an imagined nation with fixed boundaries, scopes and aims within which promoting horizontal-wise message of common belonging. As Anderson posits it:

[...]regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings.<sup>94</sup>

Formulations of nationalism have been criticised due to their Eurocentric approaches and for having provided a theoretical framework based on Western models and, thus, inadequate to the study of African and Asian nationalisms. With a specific regard to Anderson’s theory of imagined communities, Partha Chatterjee convincingly argues that the theorisation of the process of imagination is limited because it is based on institutionalised patterns made available from the West. Although providing important insights on the mechanisms of imagination, using

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<sup>90</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 6

<sup>91</sup> Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, pp. 10-12.

<sup>92</sup> Hall, ‘Nationalisms: Classified and Explained’, p. 17.

<sup>93</sup> John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), p. 2.

<sup>94</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 7.

these patterns in order to understand the development of nationalism in the former colonies compromises the whole process of imagination. In fact, in this way, rather than being a process of imagination, African and Asian nationalism is reduced to a the process of imitation of imported models from the West. As Chatterjee puts it:

If nationalisms in the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from certain “modular” forms already made available to them by Europe and the Americas, what do they have left to imagine?<sup>95</sup>

Conversely, Partha Chatterjee contends that in order to understand the features of nationalisms in colonial Africa and Asia, one needs to explore a duality of domains: a spiritual or ‘inner’ domain, and an official or ‘outer’ domain. In the ‘inner’ domain, nationalism imagines, preserves and reforms its own cultural identity whose components can be for example language, family or religion. This domain is created before national movements engaged directly with the colonial rule. In fact, colonial intervention in the ‘inner’ domain is resisted systematically.<sup>96</sup> The ‘outer’ domain is instead the domain of the colonial state. At this level, nationalist movements and elites engage directly with the colonial rule within its institutionalised framework. Once nationalists assimilate these models, they are ready and well-equipped to challenge colonial rule in its own domain. At this stage, the confrontation between nationalist elites and colonial rule marks the formal relinquishment of colonial empires and the transfer of power from colonial authority to nationalists, and the independence of colonies.

The formal end of colonial empires and the rise of independent (nation)states represents a moment of tension between and within the duality of nationalism.<sup>97</sup> Following the transfer of power, nationalism is trapped in an uneasy relationship between its ‘inner domain’ and state domain inherited from colonial rule. This inherited domain, made of legislations, governing bodies, bureaucracies, comes at

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<sup>95</sup> Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments. Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 5.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., pp. 5-6.

<sup>97</sup> Paul James, ‘Theorizing Nation Formation in the Context of Imperialism and Globalism’, in Gerard Delanty, Krishan Kumar (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Nations and Nationalism*, (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2006), pp. 378-9.

odds with the distinctiveness of ‘inner’ domain. Chatterjee considers this conflicts detrimental to post-colonial nationalism: ‘Here lies the root of our postcolonial misery’, he contents, ‘not in our inability to think out new forms of the modern community but in our surrender to the old forms of the modern state’.<sup>98</sup>

The thesis approaches the issue of Somali nationalism by exploring the emergence of modern national movements in the post-war period. In response to the power vacuum within the domain of colonial rule following the Italian defeat in 1941, a powerful movement from below (re)imagined new forms and patterns of the Somali nation. By focusing on the activities of the Somali Youth League,<sup>99</sup> perhaps the most important nationalist organisation of the time, the thesis shows how the League appropriated and transformed cultural elements, such as language and religion, with the aim to (re)imagine a national project which worked beyond the domain of colonial rule. In response to the challenges posited by the war-time, the national formulation of the League promoted the construction of a new egalitarian and united society, enhanced the use of Somali language and Somali-made economic initiatives.

By looking at the imposition and development of a decolonisation programme, the thesis investigates the moment in which the newly (re)imagined Somali nation had to engage directly with the outer domain of former colonial rule. As it will be illustrated, this shift was imposed by the UN which urged Somali communities to organise politically and to express their preferences on the future of the colonial domain. At this point, Somali nationalists moved their attention to a direct confrontation of former colonial rule within its own sphere. The consequences of the enforcement of political competition within the outer domain are illustrated in chapter three providing the analysis for the radicalisation and politicisation of groups’ interests. The dialogue between former colonial domain and nationalists is developed further in chapter four which deals with the process of constructing the post-colonial state in Somalia. Here, the tension between the hegemonic plan of

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<sup>98</sup> Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*, p. 11.

<sup>99</sup> The organisation was also known as *Lega dei Giovani Somali* in Italian, and abbreviated as either SYL or LGS. As the term ‘league’ was adopted by a few organisations in the area and in order to avoid confusion, the thesis generally refers to the organisation by using its full name.

colonial rule and the attempts to appropriate state institutions by nationalists is shown to be a key moment for shaping and transforming the national project itself.

In investigating the historical trajectory leading towards independence, the thesis underscores a tension between the features of Somali nation imagined in the 1940s and the institutional structures established as framework of the independent state. From this perspective, one of the key claims of the thesis is that the imposition of a fixed programme of democratisation via international mandate modified the characters and features of nationalism. In order to express this tension, the thesis adopts Ernest Gellner's narrative of horizontal/lateral social stratification within agrarian society.<sup>100</sup> According to Gellner, agrarian social structure is characterised by a rigid stratification, supported by an ideological apparatus, which divides between a tiny ruling minority and the peasants majority. This system is further stratified by sub-layers which are represented by sub-categories, such as warriors, priests etc.<sup>101</sup> The whole social structure is based on cultural differentiations and cleavages which work horizontally keeping each strata separated from each other.<sup>102</sup> Conversely, the use of a similar narrative in this research has a different significance. Specifically, it aims at addressing the contrast between the horizontal, inclusive character of the Somali nation imagined in the 1940s and the vertical, exclusive ties introduced by the crafting of institutional framework in the 1950s. Moreover, the usage of a vertical/horizontal narrative is useful to underscore the effects of the process of state-craft on the space for local political action which is a matter of discussion in the last two chapters of the thesis. In particular, chapter five discusses the consequences of the imposition of institutional framework on the development of 'everyday' politics. Chapter six turns the discussion on the effects on the process of unification of Somalia and Somaliland

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<sup>100</sup> Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, chapter 2.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., pp. 9-10.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., pp. 10-11.

## 1.6 Methodological choice

The thesis is based on a methodology that combines both archival sources and oral materials. The data have been collected through research at British and Italian archives, and during a 3-month fieldwork in Somaliland which included a research-trip to Djibouti. To be more precise, British sources were collected at the National Archives in London among the Colonial, Foreign and War Office collection. I also investigated personal documents of former colonial officials at the Rhodes House in Oxford. Italian colonial sources were accessed at the Archivio di Stato, Archivio Storico e Diplomatico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri, Archivio dell'Ufficio Storico dello Stato Maggiore dell'Esercito Italiano in Rome. Additional data has drawn upon fieldwork notes taken during my stay in Somaliland and Djibouti, or gathered through more informal conversation with members of Somali diasporas in Italy and the United Kingdom. The following section discusses specific questions concerning the use of archival sources and the collection of oral memories.

### 1.6.1 Archival sources

Most of the primary sources in use for this research have been collected at British and Italian archival collections. The nature of these collections is very fragmentary due to the war developments and change of regime.<sup>103</sup> In order to overcome these limits, the thesis relied on a broad range of sources, especially as far as the period under BMA is concerned. The collections produced by the War Office and in part by the Foreign Office proved to be rich in material related to the development of local politics. These documents include monthly and yearly reports drafted by the Chief Administration in Mogadishu, discussions on British administrative policy, relations with the Italians, intelligence summaries. In particular, the thesis made use of a dossier drafted by the Colonial Office in 1947 which gathered information on the political organisations of the Somali-speaking regions. This dossier included parties' manifestos, logos, regulations, and data on membership. Additionally, the thesis explored documents produced by the UN Commission of Inquiry, published in 1948

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<sup>103</sup> The fragmentary nature of colonial sources is discussed in the next section.

and collected among the archival collection of the Foreign Office, which provided useful information on features of Somali nationalist parties in the 1940s. The thesis made extensive use of sources gathered at the Archivio Storico e Diplomatico degli Affari Esteri, especially of the AFIS collection. Despite being extremely fragmented and lacking a catalogue, this collection proved to be extremely useful. For instance, it included minutes of parliamentary discussions of the Somali-led governments which provided insights on the ‘everyday’ politics illustrated in chapter five. The newspaper, *Il Corriere della Somalia*, printed in Mogadishu in the 1950s has been widely used in this research. By 1956, the *Corriere* came to be controlled by the Somali-led governments becoming the main organ of political propaganda. The newspaper published regularly letters from the public constituting a space, although limited, of interaction between the readers and political leadership. It is important to note that, being the period under investigation extremely under-explored, archival sources in use in this research have been mainly unpublished.

All the sources collected at the British archives are written in English and, when quoted, reported as such. Conversely, I have translated all the quotes taken from Italian archival collections, the *Corriere*, Italian magazines and newspaper, primary sources produced by the Italian government, and by the Italian administration in Somalia, and secondary sources produced in Italian. Due to the sketchy and fragmented nature of archival collections, the reference numbers of several documents (especially the ones gathered at the Italian archives) are missing. The official script of the Somali language was created in 1972. For this reason, names of Somali politicians are reported as found in the sources. Names of places and localities are instead written according to the Somali spelling, with the only exception being the name of Somalia’s capital Mogadishu for which it is used the English spelling.<sup>104</sup> Names of the interviewees have been reported according to their choice.

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<sup>104</sup> See the list of geographical names at p. xi.



### 1.6.2 On the use of oral memories

Defined as the ‘chain of transmission’ that links the past with present,<sup>105</sup> oral tradition became an important tools for collecting evidence of the African past starting from the 1970s.<sup>106</sup> Soon, this historiographic trend consolidated among Africanists working on all regions. For instance, in the Horn of Africa, the works of Irma Taddia on Eritrean memories of Italian colonial occupation brought significant contribution to the topic.<sup>107</sup> Scholars of Somali studies have relied extensively on oral history to investigate issues related to Somali society, history, culture and politics. Noticeably, Lee Cassanelli, Virginia Luling, Ken Menkhaus explored issues related to the social history of southern communities; Ioan Lewis extensively published on the social structure of Somali clans; Francesca Declich and Catherine Besteman on ethnic minorities.<sup>108</sup> Conventionally, Somali oral tradition is important due to the central role played by poetry into the society and by special importance given to the act of memorising.<sup>109</sup> This has also been facilitated by the fact that Somali communities speak idioms that are very similar to each other.<sup>110</sup> In fact and in spite of the regional variants, a common dialect, to which linguistics referred to as ‘Common Somali’, is easily understood throughout the Somali-speaking regions functioning as a sort of *lingua franca*.<sup>111</sup> Transmitted ‘from mouth to mouth’ all around Somali peninsula,<sup>112</sup> oral tradition has functioned as tool for mass

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<sup>105</sup> See Joseph C. Miller, ‘Listening to the Africa Past’, in Joseph C. Miller (ed.), *The African Past Speaks* (Folkestone: Dawson, 1980); Jan M. Vansina *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965).

<sup>106</sup> Miller, ‘Listening to the Africa past’, in Miller (ed.) *The African Past*, pp.1-2. Ebiegberi J. Alagoa, “Oral Tradition and Oral History in Africa”, in Toyin Falola (ed.), *African Historiography. Essays in Honour of Jacob Ade Ajayi*, (Harlow: Longman, 1993).

<sup>107</sup> Irma Taddia, *Autobiografie Africane: Il Colonialismo nelle Memorie Orali*, (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1996).

<sup>108</sup> Lee V. Cassanelli, *The Shaping of Somali Society: Reconstructing the History of a Pastoral People, 1600-1900*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982); Virginia Luling, *Somali Sultanate: the Geledi City-State over 150 years*, (London: Haan Publishing, 2002); Francesca Declich, *I Bantu della Somalia: Etnogenesi e Rituali Mviko* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2002); Lewis, *A Pastoral Society*; Catherine Besteman, *Unraveling Somalia: Race, Violence, and the Legacy of Slavery*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999).

<sup>109</sup> Said S. Samatar, *Oral Poetry and Somali Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 2.

<sup>110</sup> Bogumil W. Andrzejewski, Ioan M. Lewis, *Somali Poetry, An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 33.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

communication ‘playing a role similar to that of the press and television in Western society.’<sup>113</sup>

It is worthwhile to note that the importance of oral tradition in Somali society did not fade away with colonial occupation nor with the crafting of the independent state. In fact and in spite of several attempts to formulate a script version of the Somali in the 1950s and 1960s, it was in 1972 only that a Somali alphabet was completed and only in 1973-5 that literacy mass campaigns were launched in the regions.<sup>114</sup> Since then, oral tradition and orality broadly-speaking represented the main vehicle for sharing information. As Cassanelli argues, oral tradition does not simply carry fragments of the past but represents a product of shared experiences, ‘the product of beliefs about the past and of beliefs about the relationship of the present to the past’, a series of relationship between history, tradition and beliefs.<sup>115</sup>

Drawing from these methodological approaches, this research relied on the use of oral memories which have been collected during a three-month fieldwork in Somaliland, including a short-trip to Djibouti, and among Somali diasporas in the UK, especially in London, and in Italy, especially in Turin and Rome. Thirty interviews have been conducted based on an in-depth, semi-structured format most of which have been used in the thesis. In order to gather a grasp of everyday life experiences, ten interviews have been conducted with politicians or family members of Somali politicians and the rest with ‘ordinary’ Somalis.

The interviews comprise of a first part in which my research interests, aims and scopes were explained. A second section in which the interviewees were asked to narrate their own personal histories which very often entailed stories of growing up during the late colonial period. In the final section, I would pose more precise questions on nationalist activities, movements and leaders. Most of the time, my

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<sup>113</sup> Samatar, *Oral Poetry and Somali Nationalism*, p. 3.

<sup>114</sup> On the formulation of the Somali script and literacy campaigns see S. Lingappa, ‘Education and Socio-Economic Environment: Recent Developments in Somalia’, *Reports and studies (UNESCO Document)*, 44 (1977); Ali A. Warsame, ‘How a Strong Government Backed an African Language: the Lessons of Somalia’, *International Review of Education*, 47:3/4 (2001); Hussein M. Adam, Charles L. Gesheker, *The Revolutionary Development of the Somali Language*, (Occasional Paper No. 20), (African Studies Center, Los Angeles: University of California, 1980).

<sup>115</sup> Cassanelli, *The Shaping of Somali Society*, p. 7; for further comments on the use of Somali oral sources see also Appendix A.

knowledge of the topic would make a positive impression on the interviewees who became more passionate about the topic and enjoyed the discussion on well-known events and characters of the ‘nationalist days’. Finally, I would ask them whether they remembered the day of independence and unification. Although this memory led to different reactions, all interviewees remembered or claimed to remember, those days. Some broke into tears under the burden of engendered emotions other recited by heart the Somali song of the independence.

Most of the interviews have been carried out in English or Italian and I have translated the latter. Seven interviews have been carried out in Somali and I have relied on a research assistant for the translations. Before addressing issues related to the data collection, it is important to discuss peculiar biases which characterised some oral memories.

### **1.6.3 Somali contested past: further issues on the use of oral memories**

The use of oral tradition to reconstruct the historical past requires some critical evaluations. The process of oral transmission is subject to the biases of both tellers and listeners. The chain of transmission gets necessarily modified throughout the time as within the process of narrating, listening, remembering and re-narrating the past, each individual chooses what to include and what to exclude from the narration. Further problems arise when oral tradition gets modified due to contemporary issues and disputes. The recent developments of Somali political history, especially the end of the union between Somalia and Somaliland in 1991 and the latter’s demand for international recognition, created a public space of contested national memory that makes the evaluation of oral memory more problematic.

The traumatic and violent end of the union caused the emergence of different, conflicting, historical narratives that often pursue political goals. For instance, Somaliland’s 20-year long quest for international recognition contributed to establish a narrative that attempts to legitimate Somaliland’s independence by stressing cultural, historical, social differences between Somaliland and Somalia and so by re-imagining a political discourse in which Somaliland stands separated from the other Somali-speaking regions. Although arguably legitimate, this trend can be very

problematic as it led recently to the promotion and revival of Somaliland's colonial past by institutional bodies in opposition to Somalia's colonial past.<sup>116</sup> For instance, on the occasion of the visit of a British delegation to Somaliland in 2004, images of the British Queen were distributed in the streets of Hargeysa.<sup>117</sup> Moreover, in the 1990s, a delegation of former British colonial officials were officially invited to Somaliland by the then President Mohamed Ibrahim Egal.<sup>118</sup> The anniversary of Somaliland's independence which occurred five days before Somalia, is also revived.<sup>119</sup> It is likely that as long as Somaliland will not be granted recognition, this discourse would keep on playing a considerable role in Somali issues.

This kind of narrative can influence scholarly research. In particular, the studies concerned with Somali political history are susceptible to be forged by biased narratives and, as a consequence, to weigh into contemporary political disputes. This can of course be problematic, especially when the disputes involve donors and aid agencies. For instance, there is a tendency among scholars and aid donors to be overoptimistic when discussing the performances of the Somaliland Government. Mark Bradbury's recent book on the history and formation of the Republic of Somaliland, although a valid contribution to the topic, has been influenced by this trend and his narrative appears sometime apologetic on the collusion between Somaliland government and the previous regime.<sup>120</sup> As a result, certain issues such as the reluctance of President Riyale to relinquish the power, the unmotivated and reiterated postponement of the elections, the violent repression of opposition, has been overlooked by aid donors, media and scholars.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> The name 'Somaliland' is itself a colonial invention.

<sup>117</sup> Hoehne, 'Political Identity,' p. 403.

<sup>118</sup> Interview with Anthony Scawin, 4<sup>th</sup> December 2008, Wadebridge. Scawin was a former District Commissioner in Somaliland and member of the UK delegation to Somaliland. See also the narrative adopted in: John Drysdale 'Reflections 1943-63', in Hoehne, Luling (eds.), *Milk and Peace*.

<sup>119</sup> The 2010 elections were held on 26<sup>th</sup> June, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Somaliland's independence from the British. The date 26<sup>th</sup> June holds a great symbolic value in Somaliland especially with regard to the issue of international recognition as Somaliland became independent five days before Somalia. Fieldwork notes, Hargeysa, August 2009.

<sup>120</sup> Bradbury, *Becoming Somaliland*.

<sup>121</sup> Due in September 2009, after having already been postponed twice, the elections were called off by the government, the Parliament was shut down and the police repressed the people's demo by killing at least three. For a series of circumstances, I was in the middle of the riots on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2009, the last Friday of the Ramadan. The first presidential elections were scheduled for April 2008

In constructing a valid methodology for this research, the combination of oral and archival sources was necessary to counter-balance the different biases.<sup>122</sup> On the one hand, colonial sources were used to check the validity and accurateness of oral tradition. On the other, oral memories have been used to explore issues, such as Somali agencies in the formation of nationalist movements and everyday life personal experiences, that are usually omitted from colonial sources.

## 1.7 Practical problems of the data collection

In collecting primary sources for the research, practical problems arose during the data collection, in particular related to poor and limited access to materials at Italian Ministerial archives and to conducting fieldwork in Somaliland.

### 1.7.1 'A matter of faith': collecting documents at Italian Ministerial Archives

The archives in which I conducted research have different access rules and facilities. The National Archives in London is perhaps the most well-organised and easy-to access. Similarly, the Rhodes House in Oxford provides good facilities for

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and later postponed for September 2009. As soon as I arrived in June 2009, it became readily apparent that the Somaliland Government had no intention to hold the elections. In August 2009, the ruling party decided to postpone the election using as a pretext the difficulty in completing the registration rolls. In the same occasion, the international organisation in charge of completing the electoral registers was blamed for the situation and two international agents, holding American citizenship, were literally taken from their hotel rooms in the morning and kicked out of the country. The opposition party, led by Sylahno who is today in power in Somaliland, organised a series of demonstration against the regime that were well-attended by political supporters. Rumours began to circulate that the ruling party was willing to rely on force to stop the demonstrations. Two days before the riots the political situation deteriorated. After an incident in the Parliament in which, it was said, a MP wave a pistol gun up in the air during the parliamentary session, the Somaliland president Rihyale decided to close down the Parliament. As a reaction, the opposition party organised another demonstration outside the parliament on Friday. Early in the morning, the police began to open fire in the air to push the crowd away from the parliamentary premises. The crowd constituted by hundreds of supporters took their protest down to the town centre. There, the police kept on shooting but, this time, it targeted some of the protesters who, in their turn, set a few cars on fire. The streets of the down town of Hargeysa were soon turned into warfare and the police kept on shooting for hours. Calm was restored only in the afternoon leaving at the least three political supporters shot dead by the police and tens injurers. The figures were never confirmed by the regime, neither by the international media that did not report any news of the riots. Most of the international personnel working for NGOs and UN agencies was eventually evacuated in the next few days. Fieldwork notes, Hargeysa, 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2009.

<sup>122</sup> Alagoa, 'Oral tradition', p. 10.

researchers. Differently, accessibility, facilities and availability of Italian archival documents are limited due to a fragmented documental collection of the wartime, restrictions to research facilities and a poor maintenance of the collections. Sometimes, I was told that the materials I was looking for was missing; other times, that it could not be found; other that it could not be reached. Once, when handing the request for a certain file, I was simply told to 'have faith'.

Due to the impact of the War, the collections of Italian Ministerial archives were damaged and several collection dispersed. In spite of a few attempts to restore the collections in the 1950s, colonial sources remained very fragmented. In the Horn of Africa, following the Italian defeat, several documents went lost or were deliberately destroyed by the Italians before the British occupation and other documents were misplaced or misused by the Allied. As an occupying military administration, the BMA was run on limited economic resources and paper to be used for official purposes was rare in Mogadishu. For this reason, Italian and British documents, believed to be of secondary importance, were recycled and reused for printing other documents. Hence, it is not unusual to find documents produced on recycled papers.

The overall result is that archival sources of the time are very limited. For instance, the collection of Italian colonial sources kept at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome for the period from the late 1930s to 1950 is fragmented: for the case of Somalia it has be argued that the Italian documents that had not been destroyed or moved somehow by the Italians before the British occupation, were eventually shipped by the British somewhere else.<sup>123</sup> By contrast, the amount of British sources is slightly more conspicuous. In particular, the collection of the War Office, in charge of the administration of Somalia, offers a useful although very scanty picture of the time.<sup>124</sup>

Physical access to Italian Ministerial archives is subject to special permission to be granted by the competent authorities. Although granted to anyone, the

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<sup>123</sup> A discussion of Italian colonial sources is in Hess, *Italian Colonialism*, pp. 214-15.

<sup>124</sup> Similar problems have been discussed by Cedric Barnes. Barnes, 'The Somali Youth League', p. 288.

procedures take a few weeks, if not months, to be processed. Moreover, the access to archival sources is constrained by a rather limited opening hours (mornings only, five days a week), limited places, and seasonal closures (besides the festivities, the archives remain closed for about a month during the summer). For this reason, booking a place in the consultation room needs to be planned long in advance, once permission has been granted. In particular, consultation of the collection at the Army archive is restricted to five days per month and to no more than four days in the same week.<sup>125</sup>

Besides the practical constraints discussed above, more problems arose with regards to the consultation of sources. On a few occasions, consultation was not possible due to the lack of filed documents. In particular, this was the case of the archival collections of the Italian trusteeship (AFIS) in Somalia. In all the three ministerial archives consulted, the AFIS collections are mostly unfiled, randomly catalogued and poorly kept. At Archivio di Stato the collection on Somalia has not been fully catalogued and the one on AFIS not filed at all. The materials available are often randomly gathered in un-named folders. At the Archivio dell'Ufficio Storico dello Stato Maggiore dell'Esercito Italiano the cataloguing of the AFIS collection is still in progress. While there, I explained my research to the archivists and was granted special permission to scrutinise some files related to AFIS. However, as the military officer in charge of the archive (the one who granted access to the materials) went on-leave soon after, I could not access the AFIS collection. I collected most of the archival materials at the Archivio Storico e Diplomatico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri. The collection on Somalia suffers from bad cataloguing. It is likely to find files that do not contain the folders indicated in the catalogue, or that comprise unnamed folders. The AFIS collection, in particular, is kept very poorly: the catalogue is uncompleted, the documents have been lying in the storage rooms for decades, not properly stored, subject to the usage of time. I had enjoyed some special permission to view some of the AFIS collection in 2008 only.

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<sup>125</sup> Exceptionally, the Archivio di Stato's opening hours and facilities are excellent.

Later in 2009 such permission was, for some reason, declined. When I complained about the circumstance, I was told in response that I had been ‘lucky’ once already.

The sources consulted in the AFIS collection are of great value. However, they display considerable gaps: the sources are fragmented, often undated, kept in generic files (e.g. ‘Affari Politici’ literally ‘political affairs’), undated, and for the great part untitled. For instance, the thesis makes use of two files especially in which I found an array of documents of diverse nature. Conversely, other files did not contain what they were supposed to. Others were simply not found. The collection of the newspaper *Il Corriere della Somalia* is really incomplete. Moreover, the newspaper is kept very badly and when browsing the issues, the paper falls into pieces. Luckily, I had the possibility to consult the entire collection of the newspaper owned by professor Puglielli who purchased it at *Porta Portese*, a popular flea-market in Rome a few years ago. The thesis relied on the consultation of rare books and official publications consulted at the *Istituto Italiano per l’Africa e l’Oriente* (ISIAO). I had the opportunity to consult this collection before the ISIAO was forced to close down due to recent state-cuts.

### **1.7.2 On fieldwork in Somaliland**

Conducting research fieldwork in Somaliland did not come without a few limitations. Originally, fieldwork for this research was planned for the spring 2009 due to the presidential elections on April 2009 which were later postponed. Unfortunately, a series of suicidal attacks at the Ethiopian Office and UN agencies in October 2008 in Hargeysa caused a postponement of the fieldwork. After the attacks, it became very difficult for independent researchers to travel to Somaliland since the regular air-flight service run by the Ethiopian Airlines was interrupted. UN-run flights had regular service from Kenya to Somalia and Somaliland but they did not allow independent researchers to travel on board. For this reason, I travelled on board of a Somali-run flying company, Diallo Airlines, which flew regularly from Djibouti to Hargeysa, Mogadishu and other Somali cities. Lucky, I could fly to Somaliland in June 2009 and return in September 2009 before the company declared bankruptcy and shut down in 2010.



As the Republic of Somaliland is not officially recognised by the international community, different kinds of problems arose with issues concerning visas. Permits to stay are issued in London and Addis Ababa only. In Somaliland, there are no international representations, as consulates and diplomatic bodies, and this constitutes a further problem for independent researchers who are strongly advised to work in association with non-governmental organisations. Nevertheless, I have been able to travel and stay as an independent research.

Following the terrorist attacks in 2008, the government of Somaliland imposed a series of limitations on independent researchers. Actually, since independent researchers were very few (I had not met any during my stay) I was told to follow the rules imposed on expatriates working for international agencies. First, expatriates were not allow to live independently or in private houses but had to stay either in hotels or pensions. This was due to security reasons that, nevertheless, made fieldwork very expensive. Second, a curfew was imposed at 6 pm after that expatriates were expected to remain indoors or to go out escorted by police officers. Third, moving around Hargeysa was also complicated as walking around the city was considered relatively dangerous. For this reason, expatriates were not allowed to use public transport but expected to rely on their own transports. Following the election of new government in June 2010, undertaking research in Somaliland is easier and attracting numerous researchers.

## **1.8 Thesis outline**

The thesis is divided in six chapters and conclusion. The first is an introduction to the research problematic, as well as a discussion of the core themes of the thesis; it provides a review of the main historiographic trends in Somali studies, a rationale of the methodological approach and problems related to the collection of data. Chapter two explores the emergence of modern Somali nationalism by focusing on the Somali Youth League, the foremost political organisation at the time. In order to achieve a broader understanding of the aims, scopes and structures of the party, the chapter analyses the major trends and transformations that occurred in Mogadishu which constituted the framework in which the League was founded and operated. It

explores the main features of the horizontal national message (re)imagined by the League

Chapter three analyses the effects of the extension of the British military occupation and the protraction of the UN debate in Somalia. In particular, the chapter investigates how the UN decision to send a special commission of investigation to survey local aspirations caused the enforcement of political competition between different groups. It is argued that within a context of organisational vacuum, the UN decision had the unforeseeable consequence to advantage the Italian community which possessed access to means of propaganda and financial support from the Italian government. An important issue addressed by the chapter is the question of Somali consent to former Italian rule. The chapter shows how consent to Italy was constructed through mustering dissent to the BMA. Finally, the chapter discusses the strategies adopted by the Italian government to construct some local backing which caused an increase of political divide.

Chapter four explores the institutional patterns and structures that were established during the international mandate in Somalia. It highlights the ways in which these patterns contrasted with the features of the nationalism emerging in the 1940s. It illustrates how the fixed terms and conditions imposed by the UN reduced the space for compromises and interactions between the trustee power and the demands coming from the communities under trusteeship.

The last two chapters of the thesis are devoted to investigate the ways in which the structural framework imposed by the international trusteeship shaped the local political space. In particular, chapter five explores the phase of self-government during which two Somali-led national assemblies were elected. It is argued that the period coincided with the consolidation of the One-Party state system and the proliferation of 'spoils politics' in the trust territory. Chapter six looks at the ways in which the restricted political space being crafted during AFIS came to affect the process of unification of Somalia and Somaliland. It argues that the unification of the two regions needs to be understood within the context of insecurity over the borders, and in particular the late colonial adjustment of the Ogaden and Haud RA and the missed partition of the Ethiopian-Somali southern border. Moreover, the chapter contends that the plans for social, economic and political developments drafted in

*Somalia Italiana* contributed to increase attention over the trust territories from within the Somali-speaking regions. In this sense, the chapter shows that the unification of Somalia and Somaliland resulted in the extension of competition over the state and its structures of power. Finally, the chapter illustrates how the ‘verticalisation’ of political space reached a culmination with the appropriation and manipulation of the collective project of Greater Somalia by the political leadership.

In the conclusion, the thesis makes an attempt to assess the extent to which the imposition of the international trusteeship of the UN affected the development of national politics in Somalia. It discusses the major conclusions drawn from the thesis and their significance to broader debates in African and Somali studies.

## **Chapter 2: ‘All the Somalis are equal and brothers’: The Somali Youth League, the promotion of horizontal nationalism and the project of Greater Somalia**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Modern Somali nationalism has its origins in the impacts of and responses to the Second World War. Most notably, the establishment of the British Military Administration (BMA) in 1941 and the adoption of partially liberal policies that allowed freedom of association was met by the emergence of a series of socio-political organisations and activities. Nationalist aspirations were raised by the possibility of self-government and independence following the expansionist policies of the Italians that led to the temporary unification of most of Somali-speaking regions, the preservation of these territorial settings during the BMA, and the development of an international debate, led by the UN on the administrative future of former Italian colonies. This chapter investigates the emergence of modern nationalism focusing on the Somali Youth League which is conventionally considered the most important nationalist party of the time. Founded in Mogadishu in 1943 as a socially-oriented association, by 1946 the League became the foremost promoter of the national project of greater Somalia – i.e. the unification of i.e. the unification of *Somalia Italiana*, British Somaliland, *Côte Française des Somalis*, the Ogaden, the Haud and Reserved Areas (RA) and the Northern Frontier District of Kenya – managing to amass supporters across the Somali-speaking regions.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the key role played by the party in post-war nationalist politics, very little is known about the ‘initial organisation spur’<sup>2</sup> of the League and the ways in which, as a response to a change of regime, a powerful movement from below

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<sup>1</sup> For general reference see Lewis, *A Modern History*, chapter 6.

<sup>2</sup> The initial spur is ‘the developmental phase... [in which parties] were more exciting, more enthusiastic, more bustling with activity’. Aristide R. Zolberg, *Creating Political Order: The Party-States in West Africa*, (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1966), p. 34.

(re)imagined the Somali nation, appropriated certain cultural elements, and ideated new means for promoting the national agenda.<sup>3</sup> This chapter attempts to reconstruct the features and characteristics of the nation imagined in the post-war period by providing more historically informed insights on factors and activities that characterised the formative years of the League. By relating the changing features and circumstances of the 1940s Mogadishu, the chapter argues that the characteristics of the League were shaped by the urban context in which it emerged and first operated. Moreover, by investigating the interrelations between the League's agenda and the urban social and cultural environment, the chapter sheds light on the historical context in which the politics of nationalism and the process of decolonisation intertwined. Such investigation is important for understanding the kind of nation that was imagined in the 1940s and how it came to terms with the process of state-building imposed by trusteeship system of the United Nations in 1950.

First, the chapter explores the major transformations that occurred in Mogadishu in the 1940s, in particular looking at migratory trends, process of urbanisation and socioeconomic activities that proliferated during the BMA. It argues that these transformation promoted forms of solidarity and cooperation which shaped the features, aims and political line of the League. Second, the chapter deals with the composition, aims, policies and structures of the League arguing that through the articulation of a well-defined horizontal structure the League attempted to promote forms of solidarity and cooperation among Somali communities. Finally, the chapter discusses the support and popularity of the League and the project of Greater Somalia.

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<sup>3</sup> Recently, lacunas concerning pre-independence Somali politics have begun to be addressed by researching oral tradition. See Cedric Barnes, 'The Somali Youth League'; Cedric Barnes, 'Gubo-Ogaadeen poetry and the aftermath of the Dervish wars', in Cedric Barnes and Tim Carmichael (eds.), 'Language, Power and Society in North East Africa', *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 18:1 (2006); Cedric Barnes, 'The Political Economy of Somali Nationalism in Eastern Ethiopia circa 1941-48', in Kusow (ed.), *Putting the Cart*; Lidwien Kapteijns, 'Discourse on Moral Womanhood in Somali Popular Songs, 1960-1990', *The Journal of African History*, 50(2009); Mohamed Haji Mukthar, 'The Emergence and Role of Political Parties in the Inter-River Regions of Somalia from 1947 to 1960', *Ufahamu*, 17:2 (1989).

## 2.2 Socioeconomic transformations in 1940s Mogadishu

The development of African nationalist movements was intertwined with the socioeconomic transformations of several African cities. Starting during the wartime, a series of migratory trends and an increasing process of urbanisation were significant. This included the expansion of urban areas, particularly through the settlements of migrants on a permanent basis which changed the urban environment dramatically. This led to the emergence of new patterns of social aggregation that were based on a sense of common belonging to the city. In 1956 when these processes were evolving, Thomas Hodgkin analysed the emergence of nationalist movements and noted how the urban contexts in which they operated ‘generate[d] a social life of their own’.<sup>4</sup> In many ways, this sense of belonging was unique because it created new patterns of social aggregations that centred on the urban context without erasing or replacing old links.<sup>5</sup> This evolving urban environment and new patterns of social aggregation contributed to the development of nationalisms by providing inspiration for the formulation of their political agenda. As summarised by Freund, it was in the cities that African men and women elaborated the tools for (re)imagining their national identities.<sup>6</sup> This section discusses the development of such trends in the 1940s Mogadishu where the Somali Youth League was founded and operated first.

Similar to many African cities, the population in Mogadishu, or Moqdisho,<sup>7</sup> the largest Somali town, increased considerably during wartime. The conflicts, the defeat of the Italians, and the establishment of a provisional BMA caused both migrations of job-seekers and movements of soldiers and Italian civilians. As shown

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas Hodgkin, *Nationalism in Colonial Africa*, (London: Frederick Muller, 1956), p. 75.

<sup>5</sup> As noted by Wolpe for the case of Port Harcourt, this circumstance assumed a particular significance since the processes of urbanisation and expansion of the city did not abolish old identities but established a new range of identities that worked according to different social stratifications. Howard Wolpe, *Urban Politics in Nigeria: A Study of Port Harcourt*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975), pp. 68-9.

<sup>6</sup> Bill Freund, *The African city: An History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), chapter 3.

<sup>7</sup> As many localities in Somalia, Mogadishu has different spellings: Mogadishu in English, Moqdisho in Somali, Mogadiscio in Italian; and an Arabic spelling too.

in table 2.1, these trends started in the 1930s following Italian imperialist plans to attack Ethiopia: the increase of military personnel was paralleled by an unprecedented number of Somali job-seekers who moved to Mogadishu attracted by occupational opportunities on offer at the time, as, for example, driving jobs opportunities. As a result, the population of Mogadishu rose exponentially rising from 30,000 in 1933 to 72,000 in 1939. This population growth changed the ethnic composition of the city. A colonial census of the urban population undertaken in 1924, which did not include the Italians, indicated that the urban dwellers were formed by 14,000 Somalis (8,825 locals and 5,116 immigrants from northern regions), 2,410 Arab/Yemeni, circa 2,000 soldiers and their relatives and 200 between Indians and Ethiopians. In 1930 the population of Mogadishu was estimated to be divided into three major groups of Arab/Yemeni, Italian and Somali communities, and in 1939 the estimated 72,000 inhabitants were composed of an increasing number of Somali migrants and new dwellers.<sup>8</sup>

<b>Mogadishu Population Growth 1924-1965</b>	
1924 estimate	20,000
1930 “	30,000
1936 “	70,000
1941 “	72,000
1944 “	72,000
1947 “	73,000
1950 “	55,000
1953 “	63,000
1956 “	75,000
1959 “	104,332
1962 “	116,222
1965 census	171,312

**Table 2.1** Compiled from Puzo, ‘Mogadishu, Somalia’, chapters 4, 6.

<sup>8</sup> William D. Puzo, ‘Mogadishu, Somalia: Geographic Aspects of its Evolution, Population, Functions and Morphology’, (University of California, Los Angeles, Ph.D. thesis, 1972), chapter 4. As noted by Puzo, this data is not accurate. The 1924 census in fact did not consider that only 68 per cent of the total population was constituted by permanent residents.

During the 1940s, these trends continued to be intense but assumed different features. On the one hand, the defeat of the Italians and the establishment of the BMA pushed more job-seekers and previous employees of the colonial administration and army to move to Mogadishu.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, the war, the defeat of the Italians and the establishment of the BMA facilitated movements of soldiers, colonial clerks and servants who travelled constantly from one region to another. For instance, soldiers of the British army, Ghanaian, Kenyan and Nigerian troops mainly,<sup>10</sup> were stationed in the area and moved across the regions on a regular basis. Somali soldiers who had fought for the Italian army were disbanded and many moved towards the city seeking work. Soldiers of Italian nationality, who were made prisoners of war, were transferred to special camps by the British and, Italian civilians, especially from Ethiopia, were resettled into evacuation camps on the coasts in order to be evacuated to Italy. For many reasons, other groups of people moved ‘illegally’ within the Horn of Africa.<sup>11</sup> Although the fragmented and diversified characters of these movements make them difficult to quantify, their effects should be not underestimated especially in the area of Mogadishu where, for instance, the number of Italians increased two-fold within two years only.<sup>12</sup>

The rapidity with which these movements occurred affected the degree of urbanisation and expansion of the city. Following the defeat of the Italians in June 1941, the BMA had to set up provisional compounds to accommodate soldiers, camps to evacuate civilians or to transfer prisoners. As the BMA was a temporary administration that lacked both financial and human resources, these activities were carried out with what was available at the time. The memoirs of a former British soldier, Mike Allcock, who was posted to *Somalia Italiana* in the 1940s, are in this sense telling. In 1947, he was sent to Mogadishu where he had to carry out multiple,

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<sup>9</sup> The population estimates for the 1940s remained stable due to the British attempts to keep new migrants away from the city. Del Boca, *La Caduta dell’Impero*, p. 222.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid..

<sup>11</sup> ‘Report on the Evacuation of Italian Civilians from Italian East Africa, 1941 to 1943’ Major Hon. Peter Rodd, Evacuation Office, Asmara, undated; T. Matthews ‘Miscellaneous reports on refugees and repatriates’, Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies at Rhodes House, Oxford, Mss. Brit. Emp. s. 360-362.

<sup>12</sup> In 1943, there were 12,000 Italians in Mogadishu and so double the 1941 figure, Ibid..



although often undefined, tasks. As the BMA relied on limited resources, its personnel was expected to manage both military and administrative duties:

We reached Mogadishu on the nineteenth of March [1947], the termination point being the airfield which also housed a transit camp: the REME<sup>13</sup> camp was situated beyond the southern end of the runway adjacent to a battalion of the Kings African Rifles with the sea to the east and desert everywhere. Our compound had been the Italian Garrison workshops and also housed RAOC<sup>14</sup> depot, such as it was. The staff were mainly senior NCOs<sup>15</sup> and there was only one mess which we all shared: we were the managers of a civilian workforce of Italian and Somali workers, the workshop being mainly concerned with vehicle overhaul, having a sophisticated engine rebuilding facility, electricians shop, machine shop and tinsmithing/blacksmithing shop. Each of us had our own room and a personal servant to minister to our every need; they brought you morning tea, boiled up hot water for bathing, washed and ironed your clothes, made your bed and cleaned your kit. Our unit administered a small LAD<sup>16</sup> in the town plus outpost detachments in Kismayu to the south, Belet Uen [i.e. Beledweyne] to the north and Segag in Ethiopia.<sup>17</sup>

As a result of administrative arrangements, the BMA personnel had to move constantly across the area increasing the degree of mobility around Mogadishu:

The town was about three miles away and transport was freely available. The Italian chief clerk was a guy called Fabri and he also owned a shop in town where we had our uniform tailored to an exact fit, shoes made to measure, bought watches, swimming trunks and even lounge suits. There was no excuse for wandering about in sartorial disorder here. The beach was superb, flanking a lagoon which was protected from shark infiltration at low tide by a reef some quarter of a mile out. Post swimming, it was essential to stop at Aragnino's café in town for refreshment before returning to base. Beach to camp would be about four miles, so definitively a transport job and I landed up as the main driver.<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, due to the restrictions on imported goods imposed by the war economy, that will be discussed below, frequent mobility across the regions became a necessity. In fact, any kind of mechanical equipment had to be repaired locally or

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<sup>13</sup> Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

<sup>14</sup> Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

<sup>15</sup> Non-commissioned officers.

<sup>16</sup> Light Aid Detachment. As part of REME, it provides administration and support to regiment in the field. See <http://www.army.mod.uk/signals/organisation/8788.aspx>.

<sup>17</sup> Mike Allcock's account of the time he spent in *Somalia Italiana* as a British soldier, unpublished, sent to me by e-mail, 4<sup>th</sup> December, 2007.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid..

replaced within the Horn of Africa. For these reasons, the roads across the Somali-speaking regions, Ethiopia and Eritrea were well-travelled by the BMA soldiers who were accompanied by Somalis drivers, servants or soldiers. As Mike Allcock recalls, mobility was a key feature of the work for the BMA:

There was no instrument workshop or equipment but it was thought that a mobile unit was lurking in another workshop in Harge[y]sa, British Somaliland, some six hundred miles to the north. My first job was to go and find it and then bring it back to Mogadishu.<sup>19</sup>

From a more economic point of view, one of the immediate, and perhaps most striking, effects of the war was the sudden interruption of the colonial economic system and the self-help economic initiatives that followed. Since its establishment as a coastal city to serve Arab trade routes in the 14<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>20</sup> Mogadishu had come to be, economically speaking, a centre for trading and commerce.<sup>21</sup> Under colonial rule, this feature was strengthened by the Italians who retained monopolies over trading licences and control over most imports and exports.<sup>22</sup> Once this system came to an end following the establishment of the BMA in 1941, economic dynamism mushroomed in the city: chiefly targeting trading. For instance, the requests for trading licences made to the BMA multiplied exponentially to the point that in one year, between 1941 and 1942, the number of trading licences increased ten-fold.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Allcock's account.

<sup>20</sup> Known to Arab merchants since the 10<sup>th</sup> century, Mogadishu became an Arab city-state in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. In 14<sup>th</sup> century the chronicles of Ibn Battuta described Mogadishu as a florid commercial centre. The city became the battlefield of the competition between Portuguese traders and Arabs merchants: the Portuguese bombarded the city in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, stopped temporarily the Arab influence there and in the 17<sup>th</sup> century controlled the harbour. Eventually the city was at first re-controlled by Arabs and then by the Sultan of Zanzibar who lent it to the Italians in 1889. Enrico Cerulli, *Somalia: Scritti Vari e Inediti. I Storia della Somalia* (a cura dell' Amministrazione Fiduciaria Italiana della Somalia) (Roma: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1957), pp. 169-70.

<sup>21</sup> Puzo, 'Mogadishu, Somalia', pp. 68-9.

<sup>22</sup> The percentage of the total trade with Italy rose from 13% in 1920 to 60% in 1934. See Hess, *Italian Colonialism*, Appendix Four, p. 209.

<sup>23</sup> According to the BMA, 243 trading licences were issued in 1941 and 2609 in 1942: 'There has been a fundamental change in the economic balance of the town. Formerly, all supplies came from Italy and employment was provided either directly by the State or by the great parastatal companies with a few important private firms. Now, employment by Government and the parastatal concerns has largely disappeared, as have the reserves of supplies from Italy. Instead, there are a crowd of small individual producing and selling firms who have built up their trade with considerable ingenuity, purely from local supplies.' Lt General Sir William Platt, Untitled report, Political Branch, East African Command, March 1943, J/574/46/46; in 'Eritrea and Italian Somaliland', TNA, FO 371/35658.

Although this data does not indicate economic growth and, thus, it does not indicate an actual increase of trading and/or of the local production, it is indicative of the dynamic trend that followed the collapse of the colonial economic system.

Economic dynamism was characterised by a series of self-help initiatives, networks of solidarity and cooperation as a response to wartime realities. This trend was not confined to former *Italian Somalia* but concerned African colonies more broadly. As pointed out by Killingray and Rathbone, the war restrictions on imported goods fostered local production in colonial Africa.<sup>24</sup> In *Somalia Italiana*, the stress on local sources and production assumed a different feature due to the lack of development plans undertaken by the BMA until 1950. This spurred the emergence of more initiatives from below: it was, thus, local communities that promptly and creatively organised a self-help economy to face the war economic restrictions. As a response to the challenges of the time, precarious living conditions, shortage of food supply,<sup>25</sup> corruption and black market over food supplies,<sup>26</sup> new links and networks of solidarity and cooperation were established that centred on the urban context.

In this way, the commodities that could no longer be imported were produced or replaced locally and small self-organised businesses were formed and produced whatever was needed. Private industry made up for the shortage of goods as they could: carpenters replaced glue with isinglass, posters were put up with bread flour and the latter in its turn was replaced by manioc flour. Prisoners, when not under the 'hard-work' regime, produced brushes, brooms and sandals for the Somali

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<sup>24</sup> David Killingray, Richard Rathbone 'Introduction', in David Killingray, Richard Rathbone (eds.), *Africa and the Second World War*, (London: Macmillan, 1986).

<sup>25</sup> Food supplies were very limited and often hidden by former colonial officials: 'The present position is that the stocks of foodstuffs, both imported and locally produced, are approaching exhaustion. Imported food has been non-existent ... senior officials and the influential rich still have hidden stocks obtained by corruption. These are being sought out and will be requisitioned. The demand for local food, as a result of the cessation of imports, has exceeded the supply'. Bdr. D.C.P.O. (name unknown), Untitled report, Headquarters O.E.T.A., Southern Somaliland, Mogadishu, 12<sup>th</sup> April, 1941; in 'Somalia: Administrative Policy', TNA WO 230/7.

<sup>26</sup> 'One of our greatest difficulties lies in the incompetence and untrustworthiness of the Italian municipal officials. We are having to exercise the utmost vigilance to see that an undue proportion of the food does not find its way into the larders of the Mayor and his friends'. Ibid..

Gendarmerie. Since petrol was missing, vehicles still running were converted to charcoal burners.<sup>27</sup>

In the 1940s, the new settlements of migrants radically transformed the urban social background and contributed to the rapid expansion of Mogadishu.<sup>28</sup> New neighbourhoods were soon established in the urban outskirts populated by Somali migrants.<sup>29</sup> Before the war, the urban population was already composed of communities of different settings and ethnicities.<sup>30</sup> In 1914, Hamarwayne and Shungani constituted the oldest biggest neighbourhoods of the city,<sup>31</sup> the former being populated chiefly by Somalis, the latter by Arab merchants and shop-keepers. The series of migratory trends, increased mobility, expansion of the city and self-help economic initiatives generated a special environment marked by social dynamism in Mogadishu. In an article based on memories of her childhood in the city, Maryan Musse Bogor sheds light on the ways in which this new environment shaped, influenced and enhanced social interactions. She underscores how a culture of solidarity, which characterised newly-formed neighbourhoods of Mogadishu, functioned as social cement for urban dwellers. Noticeably, it was in the newly-established neighbourhoods that social dynamism and interaction was most prominent. As in the newly-formed and highly populated neighbourhood of Iskuran:

...[it was a] densely built neighbo[u]rhood of wooden houses and closely connected residents...Here people were loud and outgoing, visiting with each

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<sup>27</sup> In fact vehicles were not allowed to circulate during the war except under special permission. Gandar Dower 'British Military Administration in Eritrea and Somalia', TNA, FO, 371/41519.

<sup>28</sup> 5,978 Italians lived in Mogadishu at the end of the 1941; this number doubled in 1942. Untitled report, , Lt General Sir William Platt, Political Branch, East African Command, March 1943, J1574/46/46; TNA, FO, 371/35658. By the end of 1946, there were 3,464 and 3,058 at the end of 1947 in Mogadishu. 'Annual Report on the Administration of Somalia for the year ended 31 December 1947'; in 'Somalia: Annual Reports for 1947 and 1948 by the Chief Administrator', TNA, WO, 230/251.

<sup>29</sup> Lidwien Kapteijns, Maryan Muuse Boqor, 'Memories of a Mogadishu Childhood, 1940-1964: Maryan Muuse Boqor and the Women Who Inspired Her', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* , 42:1 (2009), p. 110.

<sup>30</sup> On the ethnic background of the coastal towns of the Benaadir coast, see Scott S. Reese, 'Urban Woes and Pious Remedies: Sufism in the Nineteenth Century Benaadir (Somalia)', *Africa Today* 43:3-4 (1999), pp. 172-3.

<sup>31</sup> Hamarweyne from Hamar which refers to a historic neighbourhood of the city. Often Hamar is used to indicate Mogadishu. See Cerulli, *Somalia: Scritti Vari*, p. 170.

other unannounced, sharing meals at the spur of the moment, and actively and unabashedly involving themselves in each other's daily lives.<sup>32</sup>

Traces of this vibrant urban environment are still present in oral tradition today. Many elderly Somalis I interviewed for this research shared fond memories of the 1940s and 1950s Mogadishu. A sense of nostalgia for that urban past was also noticeable from interviews conducted in Somaliland in spite of the country's recent history of secession from *Somalia Italiana*. The overall perception of Mogadishu was a city with a welcoming environment which facilitated the integration of Somalis, as much for those coming from other regions as for those from the British Somaliland.<sup>33</sup> One of the interviewees openly confessed that the time he spent in Mogadishu in the 1950s and 1960s was 'the best time of ...[his] life'.<sup>34</sup>

Another interviewee, who was born and raised in *Somalia Italiana*, recalled enthusiastically the atmosphere of urban social and economic dynamism of those years despite the war and war restrictions. He grew up in the Afgooye catholic orphanage before moving, as a teenager in the early 1940s, to the *Collegio*, the catholic school in Mogadishu. Although he recalled his experience at the orphanage positively, once he moved to the new city he realised that Afgooye was 'deadly dull and boring' compared to Mogadishu where 'everyday there were lots of things going on'. Although he was a very young boy in the 1940s, he took part in self-help economic initiatives. At the Catholic Mission, for example, he recalled that the schoolchildren were involved in the production of matches and bottle tops.<sup>35</sup>

It was this environment which influenced the formulation of nationalist politics. The challenges of the wartime, as well as the socioeconomic opportunities that followed the establishment of the BMA contributed to shape a peculiar context in which, a powerful movement from below organised politically and (re)imagined an egalitarian, united Somali nation. As a former Somali politician put it, in the post-war period it was the people of Mogadishu, as a collective group, who influenced the

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<sup>32</sup> Kapteijns, Boqor, 'Memories of a Mogadishu Childhood, 1940-1964', p. 110.

<sup>33</sup> Interview with Sahara Abdulqadir Haji Ahmed, 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2009, Hargeysa.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Mohammed Said Mohammed Gees, 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2009, Hargeysa.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Benvenuto Francesco Isaaq 12<sup>th</sup> January 2011, Rome. Benvenuto Francesco Isaaq was one of the Somali children who attended school at the catholic *Collegio*.

developments of local politics rather than parties' leaders.<sup>36</sup> Mogadishu's vibrant urban background and new mechanisms for social aggregation shaped the ways in which the League reimagined the Somali national future, as it will be discussed in the next section.

## 2.3 The Somali Youth League: composition, policies and structure

A Mogadishu-based organisation, originally formed on May 15, 1943 as the Somali Youth Club, the League was a small, self-help, socially-oriented, youth club whose membership was restricted to Somalis of 16-to-32 years old. Its main concerns were the protection of Somali economic interests especially in trading, the promotion of universal education, equality amongst Somalis, and the abolition of clan distinctions.<sup>37</sup> In 1946 the club changed its name to the Somali Youth League and broadened its scope and purposes, the most important of which was the achievement of the project of Greater Somalia. From this point, the League began to militantly campaign in support of Somali territorial and social unification. From a local socially-oriented association whose activities were circumscribed to the area of Mogadishu, the League was transformed into a national mass party.<sup>38</sup> In response to the power vacuum of the 1940s, the Somali Youth League elaborated a series of activities, associations with the aim to promote the construction of an egalitarian Somali society with no clan divisions.

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<sup>36</sup> Interview with Mohamed Aden Sheikh, 24<sup>th</sup> April, 2009, Turin.

<sup>37</sup> The aims of the party were listed in article 4 of the League's statute. The eradication of clan distinctions was the first aim: 'To unite all Somalis generally and the youth especially, the repudiation of all harmful old prejudice as for instance – distinction of tribe, colour, religion etc.' Author unknown, 'Memorandum on Native Clubs in Somalia' (undated, presumably March 1947); in 'O.T.A. Native Clubs in Somalia', TNA, Colonial Office (CO) 537/3641.

<sup>38</sup> The definition of 'mass party' in here is based on Ruth Morgenthau's classification in her study of the political associations in French West Africa. Accordingly, a mass party is a party which claims to represent all communities with no distinctions: 'Mass parties generally sought the adherence of every single individual. They wanted to enrol each man, woman, and even child, and so they had to establish local branches with headquarters, regular meetings, and elections for branch leaders.' Ruth S. Morgenthau, *Political Parties in French-speaking West Africa*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), p. 337.

### 2.3.1 The party's leadership and membership

In many ways, the features of the early membership of the Somali Youth League differed slightly from the ones of most nationalist parties in Africa.<sup>39</sup> Where in West Africa for instance, nationalist leaders belonged to, broadly speaking, a western-educated elite or to a consolidated urban class which possessed the skills and means for challenging colonialism within its own domain, in *Somalia Italiana*, where previous colonial rule did not enhance education and political associations were forbidden, there was no western-educated elite and no tradition of pre-war political organisations.<sup>40</sup> For this reason, the League was founded and operated in a context of organisational vacuum. This circumstance contributed to make the party very popular at the time, but made its support subject to the spur of the moment. In fact, where other African nationalist movements, as in Zambia, relied on trade unions' support or well-defined organisational structures,<sup>41</sup> the popularity of the League came to be linked to the campaign for advancing the project of Greater Somalia which catalysed the support of various Somali communities under a single goal.

Data available on the League's membership provide some insights on the appeal of the party's national agenda. At the end of 1946, it was estimated that the League had approximately 1,000 affiliates chiefly in Mogadishu. Within a few months in June 1947, after massive propaganda campaigns, the BMA estimated that the League's membership counted 25-30,000 subscriptions.<sup>42</sup> At the same time, the League expanded the range of its activities. Where until 1946 the party was predominantly active in Mogadishu and urban areas, by 1947 it was reported that the

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<sup>39</sup> See Dennis Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1964); Thomas Hodgkin, *African Political Parties*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1961); Morgenthau, *Political Parties*.

<sup>40</sup> The few pupils who attended primary schools in *Somalia Italiana* were not allowed to pursue further education by colonial law. On the contrary, Koranic schools were well-attended but still comparatively few people attended education. See Alphonse A. Castagno, 'Somali Republic', in Helen Kitchen (ed.), *The Educated African: A Country-by-Country Survey of Educational Development in Africa*, (New York: Praeger, 1962), pp. 84-5.

<sup>41</sup> See Robert H. Bates, *Union, Parties and Political Development: a Study of Mineworkers in Zambia*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), especially chapter 2.

<sup>42</sup> In 1947, the BMA reported that: 'The membership of the 'Somali Youth Club, now renamed the Somali Youth League... until 1946 could boast not more than 1,000 members. In 1946 the membership sprang from approximately 1,000 to its present figure of between 25,000 and 30,000'. Author unknown, 'A Note on Native Societies in the Somalilands', 27<sup>th</sup> June 1947; in TNA, CO, 537/3641.

party could rely on thirty active branches throughout the Somali-speaking regions: from Dire-Dawa in Ethiopia, to Hargeysa and Burco in the British Somaliland, in Jigjiga in the Reserved Areas.<sup>43</sup> Further political activities were reported in the French colony and in the Northern Frontier District in Kenya where the party constituted a matter of concern to local authorities.<sup>44</sup> Due to this widespread activity, the numbers of supporters continued to increase considerably to the point that in 1948 it was estimated to be around 100,000 and so a hundred-fold the figure reported in 1946.<sup>45</sup> While this data needs to be treated with caution and the extent to which these estimates correlate with actual support to the League is matter of debate,<sup>46</sup> the rapid growth and the widespread diffusion of the League's affiliates are indicative of the popularity of political activism at the time and support for the national project of Greater Somalia.

The 'initial spur' of the League was the result of a collective effort and differently from histories of other nationalist movements in Africa, no universally-recognised individuals emerged in the 1940s as leaders. On the contrary, oral memories evocatively associated the formative years of the League with its thirteen founding members who are spoken of as a whole.<sup>47</sup> For this reason, the League is not linked to a specific persona, or 'national hero' as were Kwame Nkrumah leader of

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<sup>43</sup> Author unknown, 'A Note on Native Societies in the Somalilands', 27<sup>th</sup> June 1947; in TNA, CO, 537/3641.

<sup>44</sup> See E. R. Turton, 'Somali Resistance to Colonial Rule and the Development of Somali Political Activities in Kenya, 1893-1960', *The Journal of African History*, XII:1 (1972); Nene Mburu, *Bandits on the Border: The Last Frontier in Search for Somali Unity*, (New Jersey: Red Sea Press, 2005); Anna Whittaker, 'Pursing Pastoralists: the Stigma of *Shifto* during the '*Shifto* War' in Kenya', *Eras* Edition 10, 2008.

<sup>45</sup> Ministero degli Affari Esteri, *Libro Verde: L'Amministrazione Fiduciaria della Somalia e i Rapporti dell'Italia con la Repubblica Somala. Relazione Presentata al Parlamento Italiano dal Ministro per gli Affari Esteri on. Antonio Segni*, (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1961) p. 21.

<sup>46</sup> The data indicates the number of supporters. It is not possible to establish how many Somalis were members of the League. In 1948 before the UN, the League claimed to have 93,000 members and 300,000 followers. 'Four Power Commission of Investigation for the Former Italian Colonies. Volume II Report on Somalia', undated, produced in 1948; in 'Four-Power Commission on Somalia: Disturbances in Mogadishu; Report of the Commission', TNA, FO, 1015/29. Data reported by colonial sources are conflicting and tend to be conservative. Conversely, the data reported in here might look an exaggeration. Scholars tend to be more cautious estimating 30,000 party's affiliates. However, it should be noted that official membership consisted of male members only. This is problematic because, although not included in the membership, women were very active in the party politics as discussed later on in this chapter.

<sup>47</sup> Research notes, March 2008, London.



the Ghanaian Convention People's Party or Léopold Senghor of the Socialist Party of Senegal. This pattern explains why very little is known about the two leaders who are likely to have been the ideological inspirers of the League, Abdulqadir Saqawa Din and Yassin Haji Osman, perhaps due to the fact that they both died soon after the foundation of the party.<sup>48</sup> The two leaders belonged to well-known local families. Abdulqadir Saqawa Din was a member of a religious family and was himself a 'prominent Mogadishu-based religious figure' whose 'prestige, networks and unassuming leadership' constituted the base for the grass-roots popularity of the League in Mogadishu.<sup>49</sup> Yassin, the ideological force and the political inspirer of the League, was related to the well-known and prestigious family of the Kenedid that ruled the ancient sultanate of Hobyo; to the same family belonged Osman Yusuf Kenadid who created the first script version of the Somali language known as Osmanyia which became part of the nationalist policies of the League discussed later in this chapter.<sup>50</sup>

The early members of the League were brought together by sharing common experiences during the wartime. In particular, in Mogadishu the League appealed to an emerging 'class' of young Somalis, or a 'better-off' social segment that was involved or had some interests in trading and commerce. Additionally, the party appealed to young Somalis who, for different reasons, migrated to Mogadishu and had the opportunity to work for, or to be in contact with the Italian or the British administrations. In a discussion on Somali political leadership, Ahmed Samatar correctly pointed out that pre-independence nationalist politics were led by a distinct, and self-interested, urban bourgeoisie.<sup>51</sup> However, this 'urban class' continued to

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<sup>48</sup> Since they both died soon after the party was founded (sometimes between the late 1940s and the early 1950s), their memories is not linked with the experience of self-government or independence but rather with the formative years of the party. Although Yassin died in the late 1940s, his legacy proved to be crucial for the future of the party. It is remembered that before dying, Yassin nominated a very young member of the League, Abdullahi Issa, as the future leader of the party. Eventually, Abdullahi became the first Prime Minister of the 1956 Legislative Assembly. Research notes, April 2010, London.

<sup>49</sup> Hussein M. Adam, 'Islam and Politics in Somalia', *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 6:2 (1995), p. 197.

<sup>50</sup> B. W. Andrzejewski, S. Strelcyn, J. Tubiana, *Somalia: The Writing of Somali*, (Paris: UNESCO, 1966), p. 7.

<sup>51</sup> Ahmed I. Samatar, *Socialist Somalia: Rhetoric and Reality*, (London and New Jersey: Zed, 1988), chapter 3.

evolve in the 1940s and its emergence was closely linked to the opportunities that arose following the collapse of the former colonial ruling system and the establishment of the BMA.

The 1941 defeat of the Italians opened up a series of opportunities for the numerous job-seekers who migrated to Mogadishu. Although the BMA retained the majority of Italian colonial clerks, the new colonial administration still had a shortage of staff, in particular in need of clerks, translators, servants, and drivers.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, as the knowledge of the English language among the Italians was very limited,<sup>53</sup> the BMA set up training and language courses that were open to Somalis who would eventually be employed by the administration. In particular, the establishment of the Somali Gendarmerie appears to have constitute the primary source of employment for young Somalis and recruitment of the League alike. After having dismissed the former colonial police, that was believed to be untrustworthy due to the links with the previous regime, the BMA instituted a new police force, the Gendarmerie, whose recruitment was carried out among the Somali youth exclusively.<sup>54</sup> The League became very popular among the Somali Gendarmerie to the point that in 1947 it was estimated that circa 75% of the Somali Gendarmerie stationed in Mogadishu were also members of the Somali Youth League. This circumstance was remarkable because almost no one shared membership with other political organisations.<sup>55</sup> In fact, Castagno suggested that there was a close connection between the BMA and League and that, at a certain point, the membership of the party became 'a prerequisite to government employment.'<sup>56</sup> Connections between the BMA and the League became a matter of resentment for

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<sup>52</sup> Lewis, *A Modern History*, p. 119.

<sup>53</sup> As the British put it: 'Practically no English speaking Italians are available, and although there are Italian clerks to be had in Mogadishu, the fact that they cannot speak or read English renders them useless to us.' Colonel Legal Adviser (name unknown), 'Report on Visit to Italian Somaliland. From June 2<sup>nd</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> 1941', Nairobi, 12<sup>th</sup> June 1941; TNA, WO 230/7.

<sup>54</sup> Gandar Dower 'British Military Administration in Eritrea and Somalia', TNA, FO, 371/41519.

<sup>55</sup> So the BMA: 'The considerable Somali Gendarmerie membership in the Somali Youth Club is disquieting, though it may be considered... that the inclusive nature of this Club is the best safeguard against its becoming anti-government front.' 'A Note on Native Societies in the Somalilands'; TNA, CO 537/3641.

<sup>56</sup> Castagno, 'Somali Republic' in Coleman, Rosberg (eds.), *Political Parties*, p. 523.

members of smaller political groups and contributed to increase political competition as discussed in the next chapter.

In terms of ethnicity, the early membership of the League reflected the urban context in which it operated that, due to migratory trends discussed in the previous section, was highly diversified. In fact, the thirteen founding members of the League not only belonged to different clans but were representatives of most Somali clan families.<sup>57</sup> A further contribution to this ‘super-clan’ feature was given by the solid participation of the Hamarweyne, the dwellers of the historical downtown of Mogadishu, conventionally considered outside the clan system.<sup>58</sup> By 1947, the League began to recruit with a broader age-limit by including males from 16-to-60 years old and a broader regional scale and in this way, its composition remained diversified. Simultaneously, the party became very popular among the employees of the BMA, as it was reported by the Colonial Office:

[The League] largely represents a newly emerged “middle class” of Somalis made up mostly of the monthly salaried group and persons owing their own businesses. These include clerks, servants of Europeans, traders, medical dressers, members of the Somalia Gendarmerie, and recently certain Chiefs, Headmen and Notables have joined.<sup>59</sup>

The story of Abdirazak Haji Hussein provides good insights on how the life trajectory of a young Somali intertwined with the series of opportunities constituted by the war, the establishment of the BMA and the formation of the Somali Youth League. Abdirazak Haji Hussein had been a long-standing member of the Somali Youth League which he joined in the mid-1940s becoming Prime Minister of the Somali Republic in 1964. Originally from Garoowe he grew up in Gaalkacyo, today’s Puntland. In the late 1930s, he and his brother were offered a lift to

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<sup>57</sup> Out of the 13 League’s founding members, 4 were Daarood, 3 Rahanwiin and Digil, 3 Hamarwayne (Rer Hamar), 1 Isaaq. Lewis, *A Pastoral Democracy*, p. 306. In the 1940s, the Hamarwayne played a key role in the formation of the League. Their contribution increased in 1946 when the Hamar Youth Club’s membership was of approximately 1,000. The BMA reported the League and the Hamar Youth Club shared common socio-political interests and activities, and sometimes members of the latter were sympathisers of the League or held a joined membership. Author unknown, ‘Memorandum on Native Clubs in Somalia’ (undated, presumably March 1947); TNA CO 537/3641.

<sup>58</sup> See also Cerulli, *Somalia: Scritti Vari*, pp. 169-170

<sup>59</sup> Author unknown, ‘Memorandum on Native Clubs in Somalia’ (undated, presumably March 1947); TNA CO 537/3641.

Mogadishu to visit their older brother by a Somali truck driver they met on the road. Once arrived in the city, however, they found out that their brother, a truck driver himself, had been employed by the Italians to carry supplies for troops in Ethiopia. Abdirazak decided to remain in Mogadishu working in a shop and attending primary education in a school run by Italian nuns. After the Italians were defeated and the BMA established, he and his brothers worked as drivers moving across the regions, then he returned to Mogadishu and found employment as a servant for a British Commissioner. Later he enrolled for military training, joining the Somali Gendarmerie. During this time, as a member of the armed forces, he took part into British expeditions against bands of disbanded soldiers that were engaging in looting activities in between southern Somalia and Ethiopia. Later, he was stationed in Qalafo today's Ethiopia<sup>60</sup> where he came to know about the Somali Youth League and became a passionate member of the party. In between 1945 and 1948, as an employee of the BMA he continued to move across the regions. This mobility gave him the opportunity to get to know other colleagues who were also members of the League, as in Dire Dawa, Ethiopia. In this way, he contributed to open up a branch of the party in Boosaaso while stationed in the area, before moving back to Mogadishu in 1948.<sup>61</sup>

The story of Abdirazak Haji Hussein illustrates the ways in which the war developments created some favourable circumstances for the Somali youth. In particular, the replacement of the former colonial police with the Somali Gendarmerie opened up various job opportunities. Significantly, not only the job opportunities offered at the time constituted fortunate circumstances for many young Somalis, but the mobility of these jobs, as the Somali Gendarmerie, contributed to the diffusion of the party outside the towns and across the Somali-speaking regions. In fact as the BMA relied on the Gendarmerie to exercise control over *Somalia Italiana*, the Ogaden and the RA, the League was able to make use of the links with the police in order to promote its political agenda. Although this circumstance

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<sup>60</sup> Kelafo according to the Ethiopian spelling.

<sup>61</sup> A detailed account of Abdirazak Haji Hussein's life based on his memories is in Abdi Ismail Samatar, Ahmed I. Samatar, 'Somalis as Africa's First Democrats: Premier Abdirazak H. Hussein and President Aden A. Osman', *Bildhaan: An International Journal of Somali Studies*, 2(2002), pp. 8-17.

contributed to increase the popularity of the party, the politicised features of the Gendarmerie created some resentment among southern communities which had been heavily affected by the war and came to support pro-Italian associations, as discussed in the next chapter.

### 2.3.2 Communist influences

The early ideological line of the League was influenced by communist Italians who lived in Mogadishu. In fact, following the establishment of the BMA in 1941, the Italian community in Mogadishu was the first to politically (re)organise. The emergence of Italian political associations of different, often conflicting, interests and ideologies affected the development of the Somali political organisations in two key ways. First, the activities of fascist supporters increased Somali resentment for their former colonial masters. It was against the organisation and proliferation of these associations, which were led by locally well-known Italian fascists working with colonial clerks, that the League's anti-colonial response was addressed to. Second, the formation of an Italian branch of the Communist Party in Mogadishu provided some ideological inspiration to the Somali Youth League.

Although the majority of the Italians assumed a rather passive political attitude, some former colonial clerks and administrators became actively involved in local politics. The latter were roughly divided amongst the ones supportive of fascism and the ones in favour of or not opposed to the BMA. The political associations that emerged were the following: the fascists, the Free Italians, the Italian Communist Party, (*Partito Comunista Italiano*, PCI), and the Christian Democrats, (*Democrazia Cristiana*).<sup>62</sup> As former colonial clerks were in control of the press, the parties they supported, the fascists and the Free Italians, became more

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<sup>62</sup> The BMA divided the Italian political associations between the fascist and anti-fascist parties. The Christian Democrats, the Free Italian and Communist parties were all included among the anti-fascist organisations. Little is known on the Free Italian: 'A Free Italian Club was opened[...] on the 31<sup>st</sup> January [1942], and for the first time some persons of repute, such as Professor de Fabbris, were associated with it. Hitherto, the so-called "Free Italian" movement has been in the hands of petty, shady people who expressed opinions contrary to those of most Italians merely to serve their own commercial ends, hoping thus to obtain P.W.D. [Public Work Department] contracts and the like.' J.M.C. Major (name unknown), untitled, Military Administration, undated, (presumably early 1942); in 'Internal Security: Notes on Situation in Kenya and Somalia', TNA, WO, 230/319.

visible.<sup>63</sup> By contrast, the members of the communist party were fewer, possibly c. thirty, and their activities and contacts with the Somali Youth League went mostly unnoticed to the BMA.<sup>64</sup> Formed by anti-fascists who were forcefully exiled to *Somalia Italiana* during the fascist rule,<sup>65</sup> this group opened up a PCI branch in Mogadishu by the early 1940s. However, because they were subject to physical threats by the fascists, their activities were low-profile and, instead of engaging in dialogue with the BMA, mainly addressed Somali communities.

Based on a common opposition to fascism during the war and a common opposition to the Italian Republican Government after 1945, the connections between the PCI and the League proved productive.<sup>66</sup> The leadership of the League had frequent contacts with members of the PCI paying visits to the PCI headquarters in Mogadishu throughout the 1940s.<sup>67</sup> In particular, Yassin Haji Osman, one of the founding members and leaders of the party, was in close contact with the PCI. After having worked for the Italians as a driver and translator in the 1930s, he had made acquaintances amongst them. As a result, he had easy access to Italians newspapers, magazines and books.<sup>68</sup> Among these Italians, he became friend with a communist

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<sup>63</sup> Following the war developments and the creation of two governments in Italy one in favour of the Allied and another pro-Axis coalition, politically active Italians intensified their activities. In Mogadishu, a few Italian-owned bars transmitted pro-fascism propaganda broadcasting Radio Berlin out loud all day long as reported by the BMA: 'the war news of the past week has exhilarated them and has resulted in a change of attitude on the part of the Fascist leaders ... The former have shown signs of activity in that they have threatened castor-oil treatment for the unfaithful and there have been unconfirmed reports of beatings administered to known anti-Fascists.' Author unknown, Headquarters O.E.T.A., Mogadishu, 12<sup>th</sup> April 1941; TNA WO 230/7.

<sup>64</sup> During the 1940s, the BMA suspected that the League had some external influence and that some of its programmatic statements were written in complicity with some Italians. However, no evidence could be found. Author unknown, 'Memorandum on Native Clubs in Somalia' (undated, presumably March 1947); TNA CO 537/3641.

<sup>65</sup> During the fascist regime, some Italians, who were perceived as *persona non grata*, were exiled to *Somalia Italiana*. As a result, a few anti-fascists as well as a few 'hard-core' fascists lived in the colony. Del Boca, *Gli Italiani in Africa Orientale: La Conquista dell'Impero*, (Bari: Laterza, 1979), p. 87.

<sup>66</sup> See Del Boca, *Nostalgia delle Colonie*, pp. 171-2. The links between the PCI and Somali politicians continued until Siad Barre's regime. In the 1950s, the PCI, the foremost opposition party in Italy, backed the then Somali opposition parties before Italian parliament. These opposed the League's leadership and Italian authority, as discussed in chapter five.

<sup>67</sup> Interview with Benvenuto Francesco Isaaq, 12<sup>th</sup> January 2011, Rome. See also Del Boca, *Nostalgia delle Colonie*, p.171.

<sup>68</sup> Author unknown, 'Biographical notes on Somali political leaders', undated (presumably mid-1949); in 'Future of Italian Somaliland', TNA, FO, 371/73851. The records of the BMA referred to Yassin Haji Osman as Yassin Ali Shermake. Accordingly, he would have left the Somali Youth League in

who worked as a driver in Mogadishu named Pivetti, and this friendship probably constituted the key link between the League and the PCI.<sup>69</sup>

Communist influences can be traced in the rhetoric and symbols the party. For instance, although it was eventually changed to blue and red, the original colour of the League's flag was red.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, the logo of the party represents a half moon and a clover which might be associated symbolically to the communist hammer and sickle. These influences became a matter of concern to the British and Italian colonial authorities throughout the 1940s and 1950s. As they feared that the League would embrace the communist ideology at some point, Italian sources reported in 1949:

Taking into consideration that the League represents the aspirations of the whole Somali people, it is important that the party would limit its activities within legal terms and clearly state its programme. The party has branches in the British Somaliland and Djibouti. Therefore, once its communist features are established, it will become a thorn in the flesh of all regions of Eastern Africa.<sup>71</sup>

### **2.3.3 (Re)imagining the Somali nation: the construction of an egalitarian society**

One of the features that distinguished the League from other socio-political organisations was the attempt to construct an egalitarian society by eradicating clan

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1947, have been a delegate of pro-Italian political front in May 1949 in Lake Success, and joined the Somalia Progressive Mijertein League; it is further reported he was the brother of Abdirashid Ali Shemarke, member of the League and President of Somalia from 1967 to his assassination in 1969. I have not found confirmation of this circumstance.

<sup>69</sup> Interview with Abdulkadir Ali Bollay, 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2009, London.

<sup>70</sup> The original flag of the Somali Youth League was red, while the flag of the Hamar Youth Club was blue. According to Ali Bollay, a member of the Hamarweyne community and mayor of Mogadishu in the 1980s, the League's flag became red and blue, once the two clubs shared their membership. See also Abdulkadir Ali Bollay, 'The Role of Banaadaris in Somali Society', *Journal of the Anglo-Somali Society*, 45(2009). On a similar note, in 1947 the BMA believed the Hamar Youth Club to be 'a brother club' of the Somali Youth League; in fact, the secretary of the former, Dere Haji Dere, was among the founding members of the League. Author unknown, 'Memorandum on Native Clubs in Somalia' (undated, presumably March 1947); TNA CO 537/3641.

<sup>71</sup> Author unknown, Telegram to the Ministry of African Colonies in Rome, 19<sup>th</sup> February 1949, Mogadishu; Archivio Storico e Diplomatico del Ministero Affari Esteri (ASDMAE), carteggio AFIS, cassa 19, busta 11. The connections between the PCI and the Somali Youth League remained unknown to the BMA which, however noted that a number of the League's members had been influenced by communist views. From Headquarters, B.M.A. Somalia to War Office, 6<sup>th</sup> December, 1948, Ref. No. 4979; in 'Communism in Somalia', TNA, FO, 371/73778.

distinctions. Within the national project ideated by the League, this aim assumed special importance, in fact, it was the basic rule of the association:

In this club neither difference of tribe nor difference of appointment will exist, but all the Somalis are equal and brothers.<sup>72</sup>

This proposition addressed a core aspect of the clan system, that is the existence of inequalities and discrimination towards minority groups who were a subordinate part of it.<sup>73</sup> In opposition to this, the party promoted links of solidarity and cooperation among Somalis regardless of kin affiliations. These aims were made clear by the League's oath that had to be sworn by new affiliates:

I swear by Almighty God that I will not take any action against any Somal. In trouble I promise to help the Somal. I will become the brother of all other members. I will not reveal the name of my tribe. In matters of marriage I will not discriminate between the Somali tribes and the Midgan, Yibirrh, Yaha and Tomals.<sup>74</sup>

During the first historiographic phase in Somalist studies, scholars tended to focus on what was seen as a tension between the modernist character of nationalism and the traditional features of Somali society. For instance, in the early 1960s Castagno contended that the League's aims to eradicate clan-based divisions were at odds with the array of alliances and rivalries that characterised the clan system.<sup>75</sup> Although acknowledging the novelty of post-war nationalist politics, the issue of nationalism was approached through the lens of the traditional cleavages between the two genealogical groups which embrace Somali society, the Sab and Saamale. In particular, it was underscored how the Sab, which comprises the Rahaweyin and Digil clan families, came to be represented by clan-based parties, while the Saamale, consisting of Daarood, Dir, Hawiya and Isaaq clan families, came to be represented

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<sup>72</sup> Author unknown, 'Memorandum on Native Clubs in Somalia' (undated, presumably March 1947); TNA CO 537/3641.

<sup>73</sup> See Ken Menkhaus, 'Bantu Ethnic Identity in Somalia', *Annales d'Éthiopie*, XIX(2003).

<sup>74</sup> Author unknown, 'Memorandum on Native Clubs in Somalia' (undated, presumably March 1947); TNA CO 537/3641.

<sup>75</sup> Castagno, 'Somali Republic' in Coleman, Rosberg (eds.), *Political Parties*, pp. 521-40.



by the Somali Youth League with the Daarood and Hawiya predomination.<sup>76</sup> Assessment of post-war nationalist politics remained overall sceptical and synthetized in 1963 by the pioneering and enthusiastic study on Somali nationalism by Saadia Touval who stated that ‘the most significant fact about Somali politics is its essentially tribal basis’.<sup>77</sup>

Although these studies provided useful insights to understand the relations between clan affiliations and modern nationalism, they tended to gloss over the links between the League and the peculiar historical context in which it operated and the broader framework of anti-colonial nationalism in Africa. From this perspective, the goal of overcoming ethnic-based divisions and promoting a unifying struggle against colonialism represented a common feature of nationalist parties in colonial Africa. Examples of this trend are many: from the TANU movement in Tanganyika to the Nigerian Youth Movement which in 1938 included among its core objectives ‘the unification of the tribes of Nigeria through the encouragement of better understanding and cooperation to the end of creating a common ideal’.<sup>78</sup> Coleman and Rosberg linked this trend to the One-Party-Dominant African states model influenced by Pan-Africanist and Pan-Arabist ideologies. This model was characterised as a revolutionary-centralising trend whose main aim was the unification of African communities beyond kinship under a common anti-colonial scope.<sup>79</sup>

The nationalist agenda of the Somali Youth League was similar to the programmes of African nationalists as it aimed to unite men and women beyond clans by promoting an anti-colonial (i.e. anti-Italian) struggle, national unity and independence. However, this programme was taken to extremes by the League. In fact, where the overall objective of African nationalist parties was to promote and

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<sup>76</sup> Ioan M, Lewis, ‘Modern Political Movements in Somaliland. I’ *Africa* [London], 28:3 (1958) and ‘Modern Political Movements in Somaliland. II’ *Africa* [London], 28:4 (1958); Touval, *Somali Nationalism*, pp. 86-93.

<sup>77</sup> Touval, *Somali Nationalism*, p. 85.

<sup>78</sup> See respectively John Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, (Cambridge, New York and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 507-520; James S. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1971), p. 225.

<sup>79</sup> Coleman, Rosberg (eds.), *Political Parties*, p. 5.

achieve an alliance among different social groups or ‘tribes’, the League assumed a more radical position towards the clan system and called for its complete abolition proposing to replace it with a new, egalitarian, social structure.

This radical stance needs to be understood within the socioeconomic context of the BMA, especially in relation to the impacts of the war and the British occupation. As will be discussed in chapter three, throughout the 1940s an increasing level of tension and social unrest affected certain rural areas. The collapse of colonial economy was coupled with shortage of food supplies, widespread looting and conflicts around access to resources among different clans. With the aim to restoring ‘law and order’, the BMA implemented a policy of military commitment which caused more conflicts rather than ‘pacifying’ the regions. In this sense, the adoption of collective punishments to face raids and competition over resources proved to be very controversial. Largely in use during colonial rule in Africa,<sup>80</sup> collective punishments were acts of reprisal addressed against clans or sub-clans blamed for looting. In studying similar measures adopted in colonial Southern Sudan, Robert Collins illustrated how these punishments often exacerbated divisions.<sup>81</sup> As the next chapter discusses, the use of collective punishments had similar effects in the Somali-speaking regions under the BMA. It was against this background of clan-based tension and conflicts over resources that the League formulated the policy to abolish the clan system as a whole. Accordingly, the League strongly opposed the adoption of collective punishments as testified by a 1947 ‘Letter to the Editor’ to the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* signed by Abdulqadir Saqawa Din, one of founding members and leaders of the party. The piece attacked the British use of collective punishments of increasing conflicts locally, of fostering the practice of looting, and, more generally, of using clan affiliations to target unarmed communities indiscriminately. The letter accused:

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<sup>80</sup> During the 21-year long resistance against colonial rule in British Somaliland (the Dervish War), collective punishments were part of the colonial strategy to defeat the Dervishes. See Ray Beachey, *The Warrior Mullah: The Horn Aflame 1892-1920*, (London: Bellew, 1990).

<sup>81</sup> Robert O. Collins, *The Land Beyond the Rivers: The Southern Sudan, 1898-1918*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1971), pp. 179-227.

Collective punishment laws have been enacted and are enforced. For instance, some askaries [sic!] recently deserted. The livestock of their innocent tribesmen was seized. The criminals had not taken refuge with the tribesmen and the incident had taken place very many miles away from the tribal area. No livestock belonging to the deserters was in the hands of the tribesmen... Collective punishment is also the root cause of the majority of killings in Somaliland, for when the tribesmen get excited at such a tyrannical act and protest against it by stone-throwing or the futile brandishing of sticks they are shot down for rioting.<sup>82</sup>

To hinder clan-based conflicts, the League proposed to formulate a new egalitarian social structure with no social distinctions. Records of the BMA tend to suggest that this proposition was successful in particular among the members of the League. As this policy impeded the administrative practice to register and classify Somali subjects according to tribal differentiations, the BMA viewed this trend negatively:

It is noted here that the promise not to reveal their tribes is causing a certain amount of worry to the Civil Affairs Officers in their capacity as Judicial Officers, as it is necessary in Court cases to record the tribe of the accused and of the witnesses. When asked for their tribes, members of the S.Y.C. now state simply that they are Somals.<sup>83</sup>

Although it remains difficult to establish the extent to which the League's policy managed to amass supporters, that the BMA expressed some concern on the issue suggests the significance of these new trends.

### **2.3.4 Horizontal comradeship and structure**

In promoting an egalitarian society that would replace the clan system and constitute the social cement for the Somali nation, the Somali Youth League developed a well-articulated horizontal structure that contributed to a rapid diffusion and popularity of the party. The League relied on a centralised framework formed by a central committee of elected members who were in charge of organisational tasks. The party was headed by a secretary and under-secretary whose nominees were proposed by

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<sup>82</sup> 'Letter to the Editor' signed by Abdul Kader Sakhawadeen, *The Manchester Guardian Weekly*, 30<sup>th</sup> January, 1947. A copy of the issue was stored by the BMA in 'Internal Security: Notes on Situation in Kenya and Somalia' TNA, WO 230/319.

<sup>83</sup> Author unknown, 'Memorandum on Native Clubs in Somalia' (undated, presumably March 1947); TNA CO 537/3641.

the central committee and elected by the members. The political line was discussed by the committee in regular meetings and subsequently voted by the members. On a local level, the League's branches were structured along similar lines: headed by an elected local committees that held a scheduled weekly meeting.<sup>84</sup> By promoting active and universal participation to party politics locally, this well-defined organisational structure aimed at setting up a capillary diffusion of the League across the Somali-speaking regions.

As instruments of political participation and mass mobilisation, the party's structures, in particular its youth and women's associations, played a critical role in the creation of a solid supporting framework 'from-below'. Known as the *orsed*,<sup>85</sup> the youth association constituted a sort of vanguard squad whose main task was propagandising the party's political line and national aspirations. Similar to independent military units, the *orsed* were very small groups, formed by circa five/ten young party's members wearing a red and blue cloth (the party's colours) around their necks. Due to this flexible composition, a former member recalled that the *orsed* were able to move easily and freely across regions and cities providing the party with essential mobility to link communities through the League's messages.<sup>86</sup>

Known as the Sisters, the women's association was extremely active in the formative years of the party and their activities are vividly remembered today.<sup>87</sup> In the 1940s, the Sisters were led by the well-known Halimo Godane and had the fundamental task of providing the party with funds and means of support. Since the League was a self-funded organisation, the Sisters not only collected money among sympathisers but promoted private donations by propagandising the party's national programme. Oral testimonies suggest that the Sisters' initiatives obtained frequent donations from local communities. Sometimes, donations were exceptionally

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<sup>84</sup> Author unknown, 'Memorandum on Native Clubs in Somalia' (undated, presumably March 1947); TNA CO 537/3641.

<sup>85</sup> *Orsed* meaning 'the ones who go forward'. Interview with Benvenuto Francesco Isaaq, 12<sup>th</sup> January 2011, Rome.

<sup>86</sup> Interview with Abdulkadir Ali Bollay, 16<sup>th</sup> March 2009, London. See also Castagno, 'Somali Republic', in Coleman, Rosberg (eds.), *Political Parties*, pp. 223-4.

<sup>87</sup> At the time, the Somali Youth League was not the only party to include women within its affiliates. The Patriotic Benefic Union, which in the late 1940s assumed pro-Italian features that are subject of analysis of the next chapter, had female affiliates too. Author unknown, 'Memorandum on Native Clubs in Somalia' (undated, presumably March 1947); TNA CO 537/3641.

generous, as the case of a woman from Mogadishu who is remembered to have sold all her jewellery, giving the proceeds to the party.<sup>88</sup>

Recent research conducted by Safia Aidid on the role played by women in the formative years of the Somali Youth League shed lights on the Sisters' contribution to the proliferation of nationalist feelings. In collecting oral memories among women members of the League, the author underscored how poetry, 'a platform for women's grievances and self-expression', became a politicised tool for propagandising nationalist agenda and for promoting political mobilisation.<sup>89</sup> On a similar note, Lidwien Kapteijns argued that starting from the 1940s Somali nationalist discourse made a key use of poetry in order to construct a solid national identity combining elements of the past with post-war political agenda. Due to very low literacy rates and limited access to newspapers and magazines, oral poetry became the principal and most popular vehicle to let nationalist propaganda spread far and wide.<sup>90</sup> Some of the poems composed by the Sisters became so popular that were remembered in oral tradition today. These poems dwelled on various subjects. Some celebrated the activities of the Sisters and their contribution to the national cause:

At the time we were fighting for our flag  
Sisters, we chanted and we clapped  
Till our hands and jaws got sore  
Sisters, we sold our jewellery  
Depriving ourselves  
And donated to our League  
Enriching the struggle.<sup>91</sup>

Others engaged more directly with the public urging the masses to join the League's struggle:

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<sup>88</sup> The name of the Sister was Raha Ayanle. Interview with Abdulkadir Ali Bollay, 16<sup>th</sup> March 2009, London. Recent research by Safia Aidid among former members of the Sisters confirms this episode. Raha Ayanle is remembered for having donated gold to the League instead of using it to replace her damaged teeth. Safia Aidid collected the following poem that captures the event: 'My mouth with its missing teeth deserves to be filled with gold, but more deserving of that gold is the liberation of my country'. Quoted in Safia Aidid, 'Haweenku Wa Garab (Women are a Force): Women and the Somali Nationalist Movement, 1943-1960', *Bildhaan: An International Journal of Somali Studies*, 10(2010), p. 111.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>90</sup> Kapteijns, 'Discourse on Moral Womanhood', pp. 101-2.

<sup>91</sup> Hawa Jibri's poem quoted in Aidid, 'Haweenku Wa Garab', p. 111.

Men are dying of sleeplessness, as they don't come home anymore.  
 They are working all night so that we succeed.  
 We decided to stand by their side.  
 So, Somali girls, tighten up your skirts.  
 Don't let us divide and let the *gaalo* buy us.  
 Until we hit the target, we must not rest.<sup>92</sup>

A further task that contributed to the popularity of the Sisters and, as a consequence, of the League was their social service to the community, especially the technical and supportive assistance provided to the party's members and their families.<sup>93</sup> This service proved to be crucial in the 1940s when local communities were hit by the restrictions and challenges imposed by the war economy. Besides funding political activities, money collected through tuition fees, private donations, language courses, and theatrical plays were used to support the poor, to finance funerals and to assist prisoners' families and the ones in need. In setting up a welfare system that was supplied also with juridical and police organs,<sup>94</sup> the party's aim was two-fold. First, by replicating and reimagining these specific features of the Somali society and Islamic religion, as the social service, the juridical assistance and provision of help, the League publicised its nationalist political programme. Second, by fostering links of solidarity and cooperation among the communities, the League created bonds that centred on party membership rather than clan or religious affiliations.

Within the analytic framework of dual nationalism conceptualised by Chatterjee and discussed in chapter one, it is clear that the League began to imagine its national message within the 'inner' domain by appropriating elements of Somali religion and culture. At the same time, the League prepared a solid organisational structure to challenge colonial dominion in the 'outer' domain. The language policies promoted by the League are, in this sense, striking as they constituted a mix of features taken from both 'inner' and 'outer' domains. From one point of view, in pursuing universal education, the Somali Youth League promoted the use of the

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<sup>92</sup> Halimo Godane's poem, quoted in *ibid.* p. 112. *Gaalo* meaning a non-Muslim person.

<sup>93</sup> Interview with Abdulkadir Ali Bollay, 16<sup>th</sup> March 2009, London.

<sup>94</sup> Author unknown, 'Memorandum on Native Clubs in Somalia' (undated, presumably March 1947); TNA CO 537/3641.

Somali language especially through radio and theatre plays. It also organised language courses for the teaching of Osmanyaa, a script version of the Somali language created by Kenadiin Osman.<sup>95</sup> From another point of view, the League encouraged the teaching of colonial languages English and Italian and as well as of Arabic.<sup>96</sup> In doing so, the League fostered a dual nationalism which had specific cultural elements distinct from the colonial domain, but at the same time, that reflected knowledge of the institutionalised patterns in use by colonial rule.

A further example of the national features imagined by the League is represented by the party's economic concerns. Although in the 1940s, the manifesto of the League did not present a clear economic programme, there were multiple links between its political programme and war impacts on local economy. Similar links influenced the development of nationalist politics elsewhere in Africa. In Nigeria, for instance, the shortage of imported goods from Europe fostered the production of local goods, and the consequent increase in the urban labour became a source of inspiration for the activities of nationalists.<sup>97</sup> Conversely, in *Somalia Italiana* the partial liberalisation of the economy, following the defeat of the Italians, boosted the emergence of an improvised class of entrepreneurs among Somali communities. This class came to compete with more established classes amongst Arabs and Italians, some of whom had already been involved in economic activities. In advancing their interests, these entrepreneurs found representation in the Somali Youth League which, in turn, promoted their economic interests by challenging Italian and Arab control of market supplies and by fostering the protection of Somali interest in trading and agriculture.

Despite the collapse of Italian economic monopolies over trade and commerce, classes of Italians and Arabs continued to dominate the economic sector in the 1940s. For this reason, the economic features of the nation imagined by the League were the domain of Somali communities exclusively. In this sense, the party

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<sup>95</sup> Andrzejewski, Strelcyn, Tubiana, *Somalia*, p. 7.

<sup>96</sup> The League organised evening language courses which provided funds for the party. Often, the language courses sided with the ones organised by the BMA. Arabic classes were run by Sudanese teachers employed by the BMA. Interview with Abdulkadir Ali Bollay, 16<sup>th</sup> March 2009, London.

<sup>97</sup> Coleman, *Nigeria*, p. 253.

proposed a ‘peaceful eviction’ of the Arab communities from the trade industry and imposed a racial restriction over its membership,<sup>98</sup> precluding Arab and Italian communities from joining the club. This circumstance reflected a tension between some urban members of the League and the Arab traders and shop-keepers leading to violent riots in 1947 in which a few Arabs were killed.<sup>99</sup>

Additionally, the party advanced Somali shares in the economy by calling Italian control of market supply and production into question. In opposition to this monopoly, the party fostered a series of economic initiatives in agriculture, the most profitable economic sector of the time. By engaging directly with colonial agricultural investments, the League set up new agricultural enterprises such as the co-operative *Millebraccia*, (literally ‘Thousand Arms’), which enhanced the active participation of Somali cultivators in business management and profit sharing, marking a completely opposite trend with respect to colonial enterprises.<sup>100</sup> Once again, the creation of these enterprises is indicative of the ways in which the League made use of elements of Somali culture, elements taken from colonial economic rule, and transformed these into new initiatives. Agricultural enterprises promoted by the League resembled features of agricultural settlements based on a religious character,<sup>101</sup> and at the same time of colonial agricultural enterprises. These initiatives in agriculture were also the party’s response to wartime necessities and the British occupation that, as it will be discussed in chapter three, heavily affected Somali agriculture and agricultural communities.

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<sup>98</sup> Author unknown, ‘Memorandum on Native Clubs in Somalia’ (undated, presumably March 1947); TNA CO 537/3641.

<sup>99</sup> In order to protect their interests, the Arab and Arab-Somali communities formed distinct organisations which were less involved in local politics. Throughout the 1947, a certain tension arose between the League and these associations resulting in a series of violent clashes between the two in Mogadishu and Marka with several casualties; Author unknown, ‘Monthly Intelligence Review, October 1947’, East Africa Command; in ‘Periodic Political Intelligence Reports from Somalia’, TNA, FO, 1015/140.

<sup>100</sup> Benvenuto Francesco Issaq’s account on the riots in Mogadishu, unpublished, given to me on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2010. According to the BMA, some of the League’s members were ‘young businessmen’ with agricultural interests. For instance, Dere Haji Dere, one of founding members of the League was considered one of the ‘young businessmen...[with] wide agricultural interests’ Author unknown, ‘Memorandum on Native Clubs in Somalia’ (undated, presumably March 1947); TNA CO 537/3641.

<sup>101</sup> Adam, ‘Islam and Politics in Somalia’, pp. 190-3.



As discussed, the League developed a centralised, well-defined structural organisation that promoted and reimagined Somali cultural life and set up a solid framework to challenge foreign dominion within its own domain. In doing so, the party fostered horizontal relations by advancing activities of youth and women's associations. In establishing constant participation and dialogue with the wider community, this type of party organisation sought and fostered support 'from-below'. Although this process was at an embryonic stage, appreciating the features of this imagined nation is important to understand its interaction with state-craft of the trusteeship system. As will be developed in chapter four, five and six, the decolonisation programme imposed institutional features that differed from the 1940s politics affecting the whole national project of the League.

## 2.4 Support and popularity of the League: the 1940s campaigns for the project of Greater Somalia

One of the striking features of Somali nationalist politics in the 1940s was the remarkable and widespread support that the Somali Youth League and the project of Greater Somalia managed to amass across the Somali-speaking regions within a few months. Originally drafted in 1941, although not publicised by the British government until 1946, the idea to create a Greater Somalia was advanced by the British who encouraged international community to maintain the modifications of the colonial settings made by the Italians during the war. After the occupation of Ethiopia in 1936 and of the British Somaliland in 1941, the Italians placed the Somali speaking regions of Ogaden, Haud, Reserved Areas (RA),<sup>102</sup> and British Somaliland under the administration of *Somalia Italiana*, creating in this way a single centralised Somali-speaking region which they called the *Grande Somalia*, i.e. Greater Somalia. After the war, with the two-fold goal to hinder the restoration of Italian rule and to promote their interest in the Horn of Africa, the British encouraged the activities of the Somali Youth League. At least until 1947, the BMA and the League shared the same objective which was the achievement of Greater Somalia

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<sup>102</sup> On a definition of the Reserved Areas see Rennell, *British Military Administration*, pp. 194-9.

under a British-led international trusteeship. Accordingly, the British advanced the creation of Greater Somalia during the international negotiations on the future of former Italian colonies, whilst in the Horn of Africa the Somali Youth League began to militantly propagandise the same goal.

Due to the procrastinations of the UN debate on former colonies, the British administration kept control over the Ogaden until 1946 and over the Haud and RA until 1954 even if Ethiopian sovereignty over these regions was ratified by the 1944 Anglo-Ethiopian agreement. The extension of the British rule in these regions led Somali nationalists and nationalist sympathisers believe that the UN would decide eventually for a united Greater Somalia under international administration even when it became clear that the British had ended their support for the plan.<sup>103</sup> Most notably, in the Ogaden, RA and Haud large crowds of Ogaden Somalis frequently demonstrated against Ethiopia and in favour of the Great Somalia idea,<sup>104</sup> with the slogan ‘Somali Hanolato Ethiopian Hadimto’, (‘long live Somalia, death to Ethiopia’).<sup>105</sup> By 1946, the League had become very popular, with numerous sections in the regions aiming for nationalist propaganda to reach ‘each corner of the Ogaden’.<sup>106</sup> Support to the idea of Greater Somalia was also mustered in the Northern Frontier District in Kenya,<sup>107</sup> and supporters were gathered in Djibouti and the British Somaliland.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> The UN debate on former Italian colonies is discussed in the next chapter. For the improvements of Anglo-Italian relations and the stipulation of the Bevin-Sforza agreement see Moshe Gat, *Britain and Italy 1943-1949. The decline of British influence* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1996). A summary is in Morone, *L’Ultima Colonia*, pp. 32-8.

<sup>104</sup> As reported by Lewis, in 1944 ‘leaders of the Ogaden clans petitioned the British Military Administration, urging Britain not to relinquish their territory to Ethiopian rule.’ Lewis, *A Modern History*, p. 129.

<sup>105</sup> T. Eshete, ‘The Root Causes of Political Problems in the Ogaden, 1942-1960’, in *Northeast African Studies*, 13:1 (1991), p. 17.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.. According to Cedric Barnes, within a few months the League became very popular in the Ogaden and RA: ‘Local branch meetings were extremely popular, and the speeches poetic songs are still remembered today. The message was clear and exciting – ‘Somalis wake up, and join hands, always help the weak one among you!’ – and young men sold their father’s camels to pay subscription fees.’ Barnes, ‘The Somali Youth League’, p. 281.

<sup>107</sup> Turton illustrates how the activities of the League in the Northern Frontier District caused concerns to the local colonial authority: ‘During the first half of 1948, the activities of the S.Y.L. threatened to bring the administration of the Somali areas of Kenya to a complete standstill. They [members of the League] opposed Government grazing control scheme[...] They also undermined the system of tribal control[...]’. Turton, ‘Somali Resistance’, p. 137.

<sup>108</sup> Lewis, *A Modern History*, pp. 131-8.

In understanding the rapid popularity of the League, scholars advanced different interpretations. The pioneering works on Somali politics by Lewis and Touval explained this support for the project of Greater Somalia in terms of ethnic homogeneity.<sup>109</sup> More recent interpretations provided further insight on the issue. In particular, Cedric Barnes linked the expansion of the Somali Youth League in Ethiopian Somali-speaking regions to the emergence of a class of Somalis who benefited from the war developments. From the perspective argued in this chapter, the project of Greater Somalia managed to catalyse the aspirations of a group of Somalis that benefitted from the Italian occupation and supported the project of Greater Somalia to oppose the restoration of the Ethiopian rule.<sup>110</sup> A similar perspective can be adopted to understand support to the League in *Somalia Italiana*, where an emerging class of entrepreneurs began to benefit from the collapse of Italian economic system, the establishment of the BMA and joined the League to advance and protect their interests. The discussion of the League's membership provided in this chapter illustrated how party's affiliates were brought together by the wartime experiences and the opportunities arisen following the change of regime. The fact that the administrative future of *Somalia Italiana* was pending further UN decisions contributed to increase the popularity of the party which called for a united Greater Somalia free from Italian rule.

Although the project of unifying the Somali-speaking regions and irredentism came to be a distinct feature of post-independence politics, people's support to Greater Somalia and to the League achieved a climax in the 1940s. This was linked to the development of the UN debate on former Italian colonies, which is matter of debate of the next chapter, and culminated with the UN decision to send a special commission, namely the Four Powers Commission, to investigate local aspirations in 1947/48. On the occasion of the visit of the commission in Mogadishu in January 1948, political activism and competition among different groups increased remarkably. During its visit, the Commission scheduled hearings with representatives

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<sup>109</sup> Lewis and Touval linked the campaign for national unification of the 1940s to Sayid Maxamed Cabdhulle Xasan's 21-year long campaign against colonial occupations 1899-20. Lewis, *A Modern History*, chapter 4; Touval, *Somali Nationalism*, chapter 5.

<sup>110</sup> Barnes, 'The Somali Youth League', p. 283.

of local economic, social and political groups and encouraged parties to organise demonstrations to express their aspirations. However, as discussed in the next chapter, the encouragement of political activism by the Commission proved to be problematic in the area. In the 1940s Somalia, political activities bloomed but in a context of an organisational vacuum. Intensification of their activities in anticipation of the visit of the UN commission increased local competition between different groups. Within this context, Italian groups, represented by elements linked to the former colonial administration, took advantage of their privileged position and financial support from the Italian government to the detriment of the League.

By the late 1947, the confrontation between pro-Italian groups and the League escalated in *Somalia Italiana* and in Mogadishu especially. From 1947, a group of Italian clerks working for or in collusion with the town council, under the leadership of the municipal secretary Vincenzo Calzia, contributed to increase local tension through propaganda. For instance, the local newspaper of the Italian Christian Democrats, *Il Popolo*, published a series of articles which expressed admiration for the ‘achievements’ of the Italian colonial rule. This provoked violent reactions: in December 1947 a series of attacks targeted members of Italian community involved in the propaganda: a hand-grenade was thrown at the catholic printing house (where *Il Popolo* was printed); further hand-grenades targeted public places attended by Italians.<sup>111</sup>

The tension culminated in January 1948 when the two groups clashed violently. On 11<sup>th</sup> January, the last day of the commission’s visit in Mogadishu, the Somali Youth League planned to organise their largest demonstration to date in favour of the project of Greater Somalia and to express opposition to Italian rule. In order to make a good impression on the Commission and to overshadow the

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<sup>111</sup> Competition between the two groups intensified remarkably in December 1947 and January 1948. Sometimes, it assumed grotesque features: ‘On the night of the 5/6 January [1948] Mogadishu was inundated with slips of paper showing clasped hands and Italy and Somalia written at either ends[...] These were distributed by cars and motorcycles, some of which were driven by Italians [...On the same night] an Italian driven car was proceeding round the town with a Somal who was writing pro-Italian slogans on the walls, but directly behind it was an S.Y.L. car with whitewash who merely eradicated what the writer had edited on the walls.’ Author unknown, ‘Report on Intensive Italian Propaganda within Somalia’, undated; in ‘Disturbances in Somalia: Riots and Massacres at Mogadishu 1946’, TNA, FO, 371/69414.

demonstrations that were held by pro-Italian groups in the previous days, the party mobilised supporters from Mogadishu and areas nearby the city. Pro-Italian groups decided to organise a counter-demonstration in order to hinder the success of the League. Possibly due to some misunderstanding between the BMA and the Commission,<sup>112</sup> large crowds supporting different groups gathered in Mogadishu and clashed violently. Within an hour, 70 people were killed (53 Italians and 17 Somalis of which 5 or 6 among the League's supporters and 11 or 12 among the pro-Italian supporters, 1 Arab/Yemeni), and hundreds were injured. Italian-owned properties were systematically looted together with shops owned by Arab/Yemeni community.

Reconstructing the Mogadishu Riots is a difficult task. The surviving BMA records offer conflicting and unclear versions; whilst Italian documents of the Riots are virtually non-existent. Soon after the Riots, special commissions of inquiry were formed by the BMA and the Italian government. Further investigations were carried out by the UN Commission which was stationed in the area. However, the BMA did not manage to determine what happened that day, nor was it possible to ascertain responsibilities, direct and indirect, of the Riots. As a result, scholarly accounts are limited by a lack of historically grounded research of the event.<sup>113</sup> Despite the paucity of reliable information on the event, looking at the memories of the Mogadishu Riots is useful for achieving a broader understanding of the political tension and activism that characterised Mogadishu in 1948.

Two unpublished eyewitness accounts of the Riots have been collected for this research providing useful insights on the event. The first account was reported

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<sup>112</sup> The issue whether the pro-Italian demonstration was granted permission is a matter of debate. English-speaking literature and Somali scholars maintain that Italian demonstration was organised illegally. Italian scholars argued that permission was granted on a very last minute. My research findings tend to suggest that the BMA did not want any demonstrations to take place in Mogadishu at all. It seems that the UN Commission insisted that demonstrations should take place freely. This caused some confusion within the BMA: 'the Commission considers that within reason, political parties should be permitted to organise demonstrations as they wish. The Commission does not consider itself able to express any further views on the matter, except to say that whenever possible it will notify the authorities before-hand of the intention to view processions and demonstrations.' J.S. Crum to the Council of Foreign Minister, Mogadishu, 9<sup>th</sup> January, 1948; in 'Disposal of the Former Italian Colonies: Policy Towards Somalia', TNA, FO, 1015/12.

<sup>113</sup> The only historically grounded analyses of the events are in Italian. See Gian Paolo Calchi Novati, 'Gli Incidenti di Mogadiscio del Gennaio 1948: Rapporti Italo-Inglesi e Nazionalismo Somalo', *Africa*(Rome), XXXV:3-4 (1980); Antonio Varsori, *Il Diverso Declino di Due Potenze Coloniali: Gli Eventi di Mogadiscio del Gennaio 1948 e i Rapporti Anglo-Italiani*, (FIAP, 1981).

by Mike Allcock, a soldier of the BMA who was stationed in Mogadishu. From this account, it appears that, the BMA did not expect an escalation of violence: many soldiers were not even on duty on that (Sunday) morning. As the local police force, the Somali Gendarmerie were predominantly supporters of the League, the BMA proved to be structurally unable to deal with the conflict between the League and other groups. The Gendarmerie not only proved to be inadequate to stop the riots but some policemen took active part in the looting and killing. Another element to consider is the degree of social tension that characterised Mogadishu at the time which was a matter of concern for the Italians and British soldiers alike:

Tensions continued to rise as a date for a UN referendum [the visit of the Four Powers Commission] was set. The Somali population of Mogadishu began to swell as tribal groups came in to make their feelings known. One Sunday morning [January, 11], which we invariably spent on the beach and swimming, a young Somali boy came up to me and said that there was big trouble in the town. The Somalis had started to massacre their former colonial masters and loot their homes[...]As we approached the built up area, there was a crowd of rioters on one side of the road and a truck load of gendarmerie driving down the other who promptly opened fire across our front as they drew near. We were sandwiched in the middle and how we got through without taking a hit I will never know.

[...W]e headed home to be armed and stood to for self-defence while the gendarmerie tried to regain control of the situation but being too close to the politics did not manage too well. The KAR, being Kenyan stock, could and would have stopped the riot much quicker but were held back. Some of the surviving Italians started to arrive at the workshop and we opened up unused buildings to make a refugee camp, after a few days as things quietened down we escorted small groups back to their former homes to try to recover any possessions not looted but it was a pretty hopeless task. Some of the males had lived in the native quarter and standing guard in the narrow maze of alleys was a very uncomfortable experience.<sup>114</sup>

From a Somalian perspective, Benvenuto Francesco Issaq's memories of the event provide more insights on the Riots. Benvenuto was seventeen at the time. He attended the *Collegio* in Mogadishu, worked for the catholic printing house and, despite being close to the Italian community, he was a passionate supporter of the League. His story tells us about the expectations of the League's supporters who

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<sup>114</sup> Allcock's account.

worked hard to prepare a large and spectacular demonstration which would parade before the UN Commission. Supporters saw the rally as offering an opportunity for the League to make their voices heard to the international community. From this account, it appears that tension and fears were palpable and it was anticipated that the two opposing fronts - pro-Italian and the League- were about to clash. Moreover, Benvenuto recalls the frustration political activists felt when their opponents, the pro-Italian supporters, spoiled the League's plans. As it appears, the reaction of the League's supporters was rapid and furious:

Following the arrival of the UN Commission, demonstrations were organised in the town. For four consecutive days in the afternoons, lorries loaded with Somalis and Italians demonstrated with big *tricolore* flags [i.e. Italian flags] asking for the return of Italian rule in Somalia. It went on in this way until Saturday. Demonstrations took place freely without any incidents.

[...] The Somali Youth League demanded permission to hold demonstration only one day, the Sunday (which was the last day for the Commission in Mogadishu)[...] In this way the League had enough time to prepare its own demonstration and made thousands of members from the hinterlands to pour in Mogadishu. Everything was ready that Sunday morning. The organisers intended to arrange a spectacular demonstration which would cast shadow over the previous demonstrations.

[...]Early that Sunday morning, followers of the League gathered in the large open court outside the city, just before the Italian cemetery. From there, they were supposed to leave at nine o' clock and to head towards the city. Several thousands of people were meant to parade along the streets of the city carrying the party flags which were also tied around their necks and their left wrists.

[...]Pro-Italian members attacked the headquarters of the League which were, at the moment, unattended, killing five or six members, including a woman,<sup>115</sup> and setting the place on fire. Two members escaped from the attack and rushed to the rally to inform of the assault the people who had gathered there. Soon after, the attackers reached the rally with bows and arrows and made a few injured before running away. Once the injured were taken away, people at the rally headed towards the headquarters of the League. There, they saw the building on fire and the dead on the ground. They got blinded by rage. The possibility to set a big demonstration-show, that had been organised with a great deal of effort and money, vanished. Thus, they decided to get revenge. They said: let's not attack

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<sup>115</sup> Hawa Osman Taako. During Siad Barre's regime a monument was erected to remember her death. On the ways in which she is remembered today see Adid, '*Haweenku Wa Garab*'.

our Somali opponents who are mercenaries; instead, let's attack their clients, let's hit the Italians who paid and instigated them to do what they did. The mass flowed into the city. Many were armed with daggers and sticks (Somali civilians did not possess fire guns) [sic!] and began to attack every Italian they met on the street. Instead, the Italians were completely oblivious of what was going on and moved along freely dressed up for the festivity [i.e. Sunday mass]. They sought escape too late. Many sheltered in their own houses; others found refuge in the churches, schools [and other public buildings]... the attackers with the blue and red flag around their necks and wrists, knives and sticks entered bars, restaurants, clubs and other places owned by the Italians, killing and injuring the ones who were inside. Whole families were slaughtered which is contrary to the Somali custom according to which women and children must be spared in the event of conflict. A few places were looted by hungry people. That evening, the hospitals De Martino and Rava were full of injured and dead. British military authorities did nothing or very little to restore order and to stop the massacre and looting. No gunshots were heard. This made us believe that the police had not been deployed to face the riots, that it had remained in the barracks or, worst, was present at the massacre impassively.<sup>116</sup>

The Mogadishu Riots represented a turning point in the development of local and international politics. As the Italians had been heavily hit during the riots, the UN Commission assumed a more sympathetic attitude towards them during the hearings.<sup>117</sup> Due to the active role played by the Somali Gendarmerie during the riots, the BMA started to deal with the members of the Somali Youth League with caution. At the same time, the British and Italian governments decided to work together to improve their diplomatic relations.<sup>118</sup> Conversely, the reputation of the Somali Youth League was tarnished in the eyes of the international community, as they were seen as responsible the massacre. The unforeseen consequence of the eruption of violence during the visit of the UN Commission was that the Italian

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<sup>116</sup> Benvenuto Francesco Issaq's account. For an Italian eyewitness account of the Riots see Gianfranco Fazzini, 'Parla un Testimone a 50 Anni dalla Strage: Mogadiscio 11 Gennaio 1948: La Caccia agli Italiani', *Studi Piacentini*, 22(1997).

<sup>117</sup> So the comments of the Chief Civil Affairs Officer: 'The Court is of the opinion that many officers [i.e. the BMA] have been more sympathetic to Somali than Italian aspirations. On the other hand, the Court, influenced no doubt by the sufferings of the Italians, shows a distinct sympathy for the Italian minority and antipathy towards the Somalis.' D.C. Cumming, 'Comments on the Proceedings in the Court of Inquiry to Investigate the Mogadishu Disturbances of January 11th 1948', 11th March 1948; TNA, FO, 1015/12.

<sup>118</sup> 'Our relation with Italy has now changed [i.e. is improving] but under colonial conditions it is expecting too much to suppose that the relations of administrative officers in close personal touch with the people they administer, will change as quickly.', *Ibid.*



position with the UN was promoted and the Commission eventually decided to re-establish Italian rule in Somalia.

Despite the wave of repression that followed the Mogadishu Riots, the League was able to mobilise supporters on subsequent occasions, particularly in Mogadishu. Less known but more significant with respect to the political involvement of the League's supporters, riots took place in Mogadishu in October 1949 following the provision of the final UN decisions on the administrative future of *Somalia Italiana*. Although by 1948 it became readily apparent that the UN were going to decide for an Italian administration, the delays in the UN debate kept nationalists' hopes alive. Political supporters and sympathisers anxiously awaited the final decision, for example, many gathered together to follow the news on the radio.<sup>119</sup> Once the UN decisions were broadcasted and the restoration of Italian rule under trusteeship administration announced, two thousand League supporters gathered in the outskirts of Mogadishu to protest against the resolutions. By doing so, the protesters broke the curfew imposed by the BMA that required local communities to remain indoors after 7 pm and this was used to justify the repression of the demonstration. The riots sparked a harsh confrontation between the political supporters of the League and the BMA during which the protesters refused to terminate demonstrations and the BMA ordered the police to open fire against the crowd. In this way, the protesters broke and reformed their ranks a few times before returning their homes definitively. At least five unarmed supporters were shot dead by the police.<sup>120</sup>

Following the wave of repression against Somali nationalist activities, the idea of Great Somalia was temporarily put aside. Although gradually all political parties included the nationalist idea in their final aims, political demonstrations linked to the explicit goal of Greater Somalia became sporadic. Following the restoration of Italian rule, political organisations were denied access to the political

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<sup>119</sup> Maryan Muuse Boqor's memories recalled the moment vividly: 'In the house in Hamarweyne, the men would gather downstairs in the courtyard to listen to the radio news, while the women were upstairs at windows overlooking this space', Kapteijns, Muuse Boqor, 'Memories of a Mogadishu Childhood', p. 113.

<sup>120</sup> Mr Gamble, Telegram n. 87 from Mogadishu to the Foreign Office, 5<sup>th</sup> October, 1949; in 'Political Situation in Somalia', TNA, FO, 371/73795.

arena and were allowed a very limited representation in the exercise of governance. Any power was limited to local and bureaucratic matters. Irredentism remained the final goal of political parties but the nationalist campaign was put aside and revived in 1954, as will be discussed in chapter six, when the project of Greater Somalia became the spur to the unification of *Somalia Italiana* and British Somaliland.

## 2.5 Conclusion

By investigating the historical developments that concerned former *Somalia Italiana* during the wartime, the chapter examined the emergence of Somali nationalism looking at the Somali Youth League. The main argument suggested that affiliations to the League were based on a common sense of belonging and by sharing common experiences during wartime. Particular importance was given to the socioeconomic context of Mogadishu and it was argued that the period was characterised by a series of possibilities and restrictions dictated by the military occupation and the wartime economy that fostered private initiatives and economic activities enhancing urban social cohesion. This context influenced the make up of the membership and the policies of the League.

Moreover, the chapter argued that the establishment of the League marked the emergence of a new way of conceiving nationalist politics. With reference to Chatterjee's formulation of dyadic nationalism, the chapter showed that the League promoted a certain kind of nationalism which had specific elements of the Somali 'inner' domain. In doing so, the League created a series of horizontal structures that were created to enhance the party's popularity. The 'youth' character of the League's formative years influenced the conceptualisation of the party politics constituting a revolutionary attitude and a new way of conceiving nationalist politics. From this perspective, where the early anti-colonial politics resisted colonial domination in the 'inner' domain by imagining, preserving and reforming its own cultural identity,<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Sayid Maxamed Cabdhulle Xasan's 21-year long struggle against colonial occupation is perhaps the most well-known. See Robert L. Hess, 'The Poor Man of God. Muhammad Abdullah Hassan' in Norman R. Bennett (ed.) *Leadership Eastern Africa. Six Political Biographies*, (Boston: Boston University Press, 1968); G. Nicolosi, *Imperialismo e Resistenza in Corno d'Africa: Mohammed Abdullah Hassan e il Derviscismo somalo 1899-1920*, (Catanzaro: Rubettino, 2002); A. Sheik-Abdi

nationalist movements engaged directly with the foreign rule within its own framework or 'outer' domain. In this way, by assimilating the 'outer' domain, nationalists were prepared to questioning the Italian claims of dominion formally. As discussed, at first the League's (re)imagined a new 'inner' domain by making use of Somali language or religious elements.

Although the political trends analysed in the chapter were still taking shape in the 1940s, appreciating their characteristics is important to understand how these features were shaped by the politics of decolonisation and especially in relation to the institutional framework implemented during the trusteeship administrations. As it will be argued in chapter four, this framework was characterised by vertical structures that were opposed to the horizontal features and structures promoted by the League in the 1940s. The 'verticalisation' of Somali political space affected the project of Greater Somalia and of Somali unification which would lose its inclusive character and become the domain of a restricted political leadership. In the short-term, the transformation of nationalism into a vertical structure of power led to neglecting the needs of southern regions that were in a minority position. As the next chapter argues, in the 1940s for these communities the significant impact of the war and British occupation led them in a different direction to that of the supporters of the League so that some decided to back pro-Italian political organisations

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*Divine Madness. Mohammed Abdule Hassan (1856-1920)*, (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1993); Sais S. Samatar, *Oral Poetry and Somali Nationalism. The case of Sayyid Mahammad 'Abdille Hasan*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

## **Chapter 3: Enforcing political competition: the UN commission of investigation, the consolidation of the '*pro-Italia*' and radicalisation of political conflicts**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter investigated features of Somali nationalism which emerged in responses to the Second World War. It was argued that the establishment of the BMA was followed by socio-economic dynamism in Mogadishu which influenced the political ideology, aims and structure of the Somali Youth League. The development of an international debate, led by the UN on the administrative future of former Italian colonies, raised nationalist aspirations and possibilities of territorial unification of the Somali-speaking regions – i.e. the idea of Greater Somalia. This chapter discusses how the protraction of the international debate and the extension of the British military administration caused the radicalisation of conflicts among different groups and the consolidation of a political front which successfully backed Italian rule before the UN. In exploring these issues, the chapter reveals the dynamics behind the restoration of Italian rule and how these shaped Somali political space thereafter.

Firstly, the chapter discusses the main features of the UN debate and argues that the delays of the international community coupled with their decision to send a special commission of investigation into the area urged local communities to organise politically. The approach adopted by the UN forced local communities to choose between an Italian or British trusteeship. This restricted choice led some southern and agriculturist communities to join the pro-Italian political front. In order to appreciate their political stance, the chapter discusses the socioeconomic impacts of the war and of an extended military occupation. It is maintained that some policies adopted by the BMA proved to be inadequate when faced with the collapse of the colonial economy; the unrest that followed the war created strong dissent to British rule. Subsequently, the chapter explores Italian strategies at constructing local

backing by making use of dissent to the BMA. As a result, Italian policies increased and radicalised conflicts among different groups in *Somalia Italiana*, in particular between the pro-Italian political front and the Somali Youth League. This division affected the development of Somali politics in the 1950s and after independence.

### 3.2 The UN debate and the ‘pro-Italia’ political front

There have been intertwined relations between the UN debate on former Italian colonies and the development of local politics in *Somalia Italiana*. Starting at the Peace Conference in 1945, the UN debate took longer than expected, only reaching a final decision in November 1949. The delay of discussions was mainly due to the inability of the Great Powers, Britain, France, Soviet Union and United States, to agree upon the issue.<sup>1</sup> The conflicting interests of the Cold War led their official positions to change radically over the time period. At a first stage, there was a general consensus that no colonies would be returned to Italy under any form of mandate. However, as soon as the British proposed a trusteeship administration of Greater Somalia in 1946, other powers became more concerned with preventing British interests in the area. Additionally, Cold War alliances caused a general improvement of international relations with the Italian government, which had by 1946 assumed pro-Western features.<sup>2</sup> Further issues arose around the possibility of communist influences in the region in the event of Soviet Union-led administration.

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<sup>1</sup> For an account of the international debate on former Italian colonies see Gianluigi Rossi, ‘Le Colonie Italiane alla Conferenza di Potsdam (Luglio-Agosto 1945)’, *Africa*[Rome], XXVIII:4 (1973); Gianluigi Rossi, ‘Guerra Fredda e Questione delle ex Colonie Italiane nel 1947’, *Africa*[Rome], XXXIII:4 (1978); Gianluigi Rossi, *L’Africa Italiana verso l’Indipendenza (1941-1949)*, (Milan: Giuffrè, 1980); Saul Kelly, *Cold War in the Desert: Britain, the United States and the Italian Colonies, 1945-52*, (London: Macmillan, 2000); Saul Kelly, ‘Britain, the United States, and the End of the Italian Empire in Africa, 1940-52’, in Kent Fedorowich, Martin Thomas (eds), *International Diplomacy and Colonial Retreat*, (London and Portland: Frank Cass, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> These improvements led to the agreements between Italy and Britain, the Bevin-Sforza plan. See Gat, *Britain and Italy*; Count Sforza, *Cinque Anni a Palazzo Chigi. La Politica Estera Italiana dal 1947 al 1951*, (Rome: Atlante, 1952); Gian Paolo Calchi Novati, ‘La Sistemazione delle Colonie Italiane dell’Africa Orientale e i Condizionamenti della Guerra Fredda’, in Angelo Del Boca, *Le Guerre Coloniali del Fascismo*, (Bari: Laterza, 1991).

For all these reasons, opposition to Italy became weaker within the UN and the prospect of returning colonies to Italy more solid if not necessary.<sup>3</sup>

In many ways, the delays of the UN negotiations and the Powers' shifting attitudes had negative effects in Somalia and Eritrea alike. In particular, the 1947 decision of the UN to form a special commission, the Four Powers Commission, which would visit the colonies and investigate on the political aspirations of local communities, increased competitions locally.<sup>4</sup> In late 1947, the Commission travelled to the Horn of Africa and remained in the area until January 1948. During this time, hearings were planned with communities' representatives who were asked to express their political aspirations before the commission. In spite of this democratic approach to pursuing a resolution by taking into consideration local aspirations, the decision to send a special commission had major effects on the development of local politics in former Italian colonies. In scheduling hearings with representatives of economic, political and social groups, the UN urged local communities to organise politically. This, however, became problematic due to the organisational vacuum that characterised former Italian colonies. Where, as argued in the last chapter, socio-economic and political dynamism mushroomed following the Italian defeat, this process was still consolidating in the 1940s. The immediate result of enforcing political competition was that groups that possessed more resources, that held key positions in economic productive sectors, or that had access to means of propaganda, became necessarily more visible. Among these groups, the Italians were able to secure a restoration of their rule by supporting an umbrella association, namely the *Conferenza per la Somalia*. The next paragraphs present the main characteristics of this pro-Italian political front and investigates the options offered at the time by the UN.

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<sup>3</sup> Despite the initial plans of the UN, by 1948 the prospect of returning colonial possessions to Italy seemed the only way to overcome the international impasse. Out of former Italian colonies, Somalia was the poorest and where international interests were less predominant.

<sup>4</sup> On Eritrea see Iyob, *The Eritrean Struggle*; Lloyd Ellingson, 'The Emergence of Political Parties in Eritrea, 1941-1950', *The Journal of African History*, XVIII:2 (1977).

### 3.2.1 The 'pro-Italia'

The 'pro-Italia'<sup>5</sup> were members of the umbrella association, namely *Conferenza per la Somalia*, that had been founded by the Italians in 1947 to back their return before the Four Power Commission of investigation. The organisations which joined the *Conferenza* were social-oriented groups which emerged in the mid-1940s in *Somalia Italiana*, especially in the riverine agriculturist regions and Banaadir coast. Among these associations which had no defined political programme, there were the Patriotic Benefit Union, also known as Jumiya, founded on June, 6, 1943 in Mogadishu with some generous donations of the Arab/Yemeni community, the Hizbia Digil and Mirifle founded in 1946, and the Abgal Youth Association, Hidalet al Islam Shdle e Mobilen, and Bimal Union.<sup>6</sup> They shared certain socially-oriented concerns, as for instance they encouraged assistance for the poor, and promoted the interests and protection of local communities with special regard to the agricultural sector, trade and commerce. Their activities were localised to the southern agriculturist regions, in particular, they had active branches in Afgooye, Wanla Weyn, Bur Hakaba, Baydhabo, Jowhar and Mahadaay Weyn.<sup>7</sup>

The emergence of the *Conferenza* was the result of a joint effort between former colonial masters, the Italian government and members of the above mentioned associations. In the 1940s Italian economic interests lied in Somali agriculture, in particular in the production of sugar and the banana plantations controlled by Italian settlers or concessionaries. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, these settlers, perhaps a hundred families, enjoyed financial support from the metropole which imposed a monopoly according to which bananas had to be imported from Italian plantations in Somalia exclusively.<sup>8</sup> As Ernesto Rossi, an Italian journalist, emphasised in the late 1940s, although the Italian settlers in Somalia were numerically few, they constituted a powerful economic lobby that

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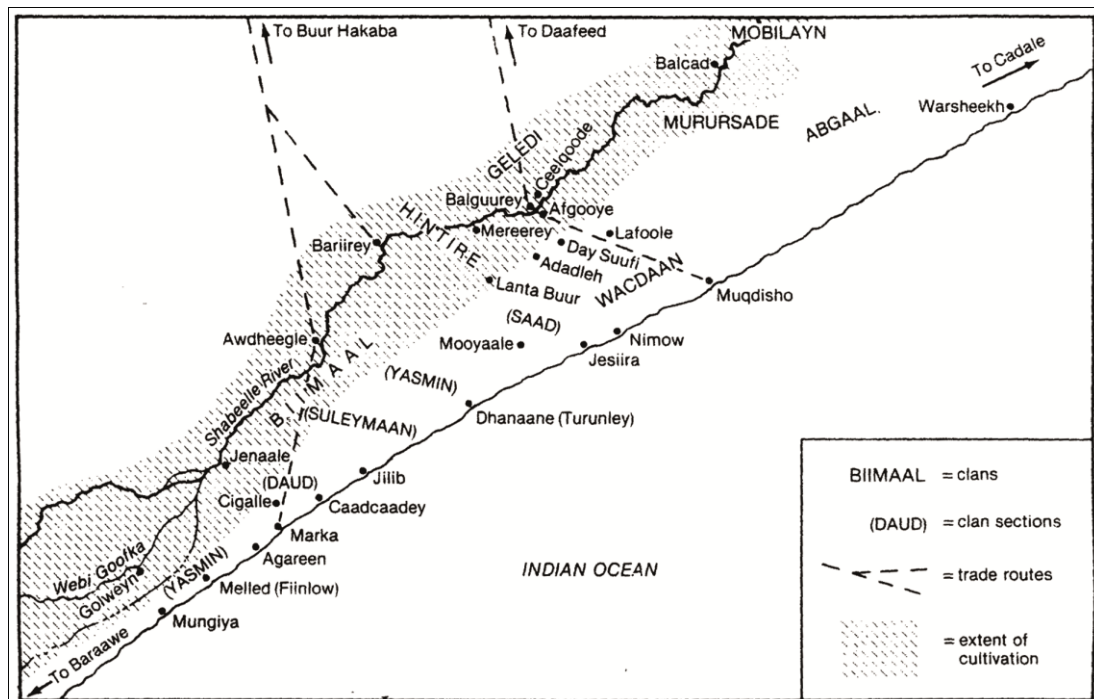
<sup>5</sup> So they are referred to in oral memories. Research notes, March 2009, London.

<sup>6</sup> Author unknown, 'Memorandum on Native Clubs in Somalia' (undated, presumably March 1947); in TNA, CO, 537/3641.

<sup>7</sup> By 1947, the membership of the Union and Hizbia, for instance, was estimated to be of approximately 1,000 subscriptions each in Mogadishu. Ibid..

<sup>8</sup> Hess, *Italian Colonialism*, p. 165.

influenced the policies of post-war Italian governments.<sup>9</sup> As discussed later in this chapter, the presence of these economic interests led the Italian government to finance ‘pro-Italia’ propaganda and the creation of a political front.<sup>10</sup> In this way, by the end of 1947, the *Conferenza* managed to complete a 23-point programme for the UN commission that called for a 30-year international administration under Italy. The programme scheduled plans in agricultural, trade, industry, education, socio-political development.<sup>11</sup>



Map.3.1. Southern Somalia, the Lower Shabeelle Valley. Source: Cassanelli, *The Shaping of Somali Society*, p. 184.

Assessing the reasons why certain Somali associations joined the *Conferenza* and backed Italy before the UN is a difficult task. First, very little is known about

<sup>9</sup> Before the war, there were 38 concessionaries along the Juba river (1,500 hectares under cultivation); 143 concessionaries in Jaanale (4,000 hectares under cultivation); 25 agricultural enterprises in Afgooye cultivating bananas. Ernesto Rossi, *Settimo: Non Rubare. Le Scorribande dei Potentati Economici e le Connivenze Politico-Affaristiche nell'Italia del primo Dopoguerra* (Milan: KAOS Edizioni, 2002), p. 453.

<sup>10</sup> Del Boca, *Nostalgia delle Colonie*, pp. 168-79.

<sup>11</sup> Bullotta, *La Somalia Sotto Due Bandiere*, p. 183.



these associations due to the paucity of first-hand research conducted on this political front by an early generation of scholars who, instead, focused on the majority party, the Somali Youth League. This trend was not confined to Somalia but concerned the study of African nationalist politics at the time. As underscored by Aristide Zolberg in a 1966 study of the party-states in West Africa, there was a tendency among scholars of African politics to concentrate on large and dominant political organisations and to conform their views ‘through the eyes of the winners’. For this reason, scholarly accounts of African politics have often underestimated the importance of minority associations and exaggerated the differences between these and majority parties.<sup>12</sup>

On a different level, accounts of the ‘pro-Italia’ political front have been influenced by biases related to the Allied campaign and propaganda against fascism. As highlighted in chapter one, these biases were characterised by a narrative which simplified the differences between ‘enemies’ and ‘winners’, the ‘bad’ and ‘good’ side, and correspondingly, between former Italian rule and the BMA. This discourse affected the documents that were produced on Somali socio-political organisations. Within this context, the ‘pro-Italia’ belonged to the ‘bad’ side and their political stance and claims were therefore ridiculed. Moreover, as their activities and support was localised to certain area and communities, their aspirations were discarded. Accordingly, the BMA often described the ‘pro-Italia’ as ‘tribal’ and ‘badly organised’ in opposition to the League which was instead depicted as a ‘national’, ‘modern’, and ‘progressive’ organisation.<sup>13</sup> This discourse had a long-lasting influence on scholarly production. For instance, while compiling an account on the dispositions of former Italian colonies in the 1950s, Sylvia Pankhurst, dedicated little attention to this political front whose claims were discredited as being ‘naive’, whose accusations against the BMA were reported as ‘exaggerations’, whose statements on the socioeconomic situation were described as false, and whose political stance was deemed anti-progressive.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Zolberg, *Creating Political Order*, p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> Author unknown, ‘Memorandum on Native Clubs in Somalia’ (undated, presumably March 1947); TNA CO 537/3641.

<sup>14</sup> Pankhurst, *Ex-Italian Somaliland*, pp. 238-9.

Furthermore, the political aspirations of the ‘pro-Italia’ had been discarded by an early generation of scholars who had approached their political activism in terms of the traditional cleavages between Sab and Saamale. From this perspective, the Sab communities comprised the majority of the Somali Youth League, and Saamale sedentary communities came to be associated with the *Conferenza*. This perspective led some scholars to suggest that the ‘pro-Italia’ political stance had to be understood as a clan-based reaction to the ideals and aims of the League.<sup>15</sup> Despite the fact that during the last two decades in which historiographies on Somali studies have been widely revised, blind spots remain on the ‘pro-Italia’. Recently, Somali author Mukthar investigated the development of pre-independence politics among southern communities, however he glossed over the support of certain associations for Italian rule.<sup>16</sup> This neglect is problematic because certain biases still characterise scholarly literature in which the ‘pro-Italia’ bear the stigma of having favoured the return of Somalia to Italy. For instance, Prunier’s recent comparative essay on British and Italian colonial rule in Somalia and Somaliland deals with the ‘pro-Italia’ supporters in terms of bribes, corruption and as the result of Italian muddling:

Italian agents, working undercover within the framework of the Four Powers Commission, organised pro-Italian groups in the loosely-coordinated Conferenza and also helped start the Hizbil Digil Mirifle Somali (HDMS)<sup>17</sup>, a clanic party based on the southern Rahaweyn (Digil Mirifle) clans... [In order to advance its own interests, the Italian government] kept selecting and backing tribes – that is, clans or sub-clans – which were *filoitaliani* (‘pro-Italian’). These included the

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<sup>15</sup> So Alphonse Castagno: ‘the basic reasons for their formation stemmed from clan issues and the fear of SYL [Somali Youth League] radicalism’, Castagno, ‘Somali Republic’, in Coleman, Rosberg (eds.), *Political Parties*, pp. 523-4.

<sup>16</sup> In investigating issues related to resistance to colonialism among riverine communities, the author makes important contribution to Somalist debates. However, he does not deal with the issue of the ‘pro-Italia’. In fact, his study on the Hizbia Digil & Mirifle rules out the possibility that the party played an active role among the ‘pro-Italia’: ‘The Hizbia Dighil Mirifle initially supported the Somalia conference, but soon denounced it and requested the Trusteeship of any government chosen by Four Powers... Though we cannot exclude Hizbia from the pro-Italian tendency, it never advocated the return of the Italians.’ Mukthar, ‘The Emergence and Role of Political Parties’, p. 78. See also his account of pre-independence politics in the area: Mohamed Haji Mukthar, ‘The Plight of the Agro-Pastoral Society of Somalia’, *Review of African Political Economy*, 23:70 (1996), p. 548.

<sup>17</sup> In fact, Prunier mistakes the name of the party. In 1946, it was called the Hizbia Digil & Mirifle (HDM). As it will be discussed in chapter five, due to special legislation adopted by the first Legislative Assembly in 1956 which forbade the use of clannish nomenclatures for political organisations, the party became Hizbia Dastur Mustakil Somali (HDMS), the Somali Independent Constitutional Party.

Rahanweyn of the HDMS of course, but also the Somali Bantu, various small coastal clans like the Biimaal and, among the larger clan families, those like the Marrexaan among the Darood or several Abgal groups among the Hawiye who proved open to blandishments, often of a financial nature.<sup>18</sup>

By stressing the ‘loosely-coordinated’ features of the ‘pro-Italia’ and their ‘openness’ to Italian bribing, this discourse ridiculed the political front without engaging with the reasons behind its political stance. In order to shed light on the human agency of the ‘pro-Italia’ there is need to take into account the historical framework represented by the British military occupation, the development of the UN debate and the options that were on offer at the time.

### 3.2.2 ‘Choosing between the devil and the deep blue sea’: the BMA and Italian rule

The democratic approach of the UN to the issue of former Italian colonies was, in fact, very limited. The Four Powers Commission urged local representatives to express their aspirations by reducing these to two, or at best three, choices: federation with Ethiopia or international trusteeship (either under Italy or Britain) in Eritrea; international trusteeship under Britain or Italy in *Somalia Italiana*.<sup>19</sup> As far as the latter is concerned, the reports of the commission divided political organisations between two main fronts: the Somali Youth League, the foremost local organisation, which proposed an international trusteeship for Somalia excluding categorically a restoration of Italian rule; and the *Conferenza per la Somalia*, which instead advanced an Italian trusteeship. The restrictive choice represented by the visit of the commission had the consequence of radicalising the division between different groups and to reduce it to two groups with long-lasting effects. In fact, an analysis of the UN reports reveals that the major concern of the Commission was not to

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<sup>18</sup> Gerald Prunier, ‘Benign Neglect Versus *La Grande Somalia*: The Colonial Legacy and the Post-Colonial Somali State’, in Hoehne, Luling (eds.), *Milk and Peace*, pp. 44-5.

<sup>19</sup> By the end of 1947, the prospect of a British trusteeship in *Somalia Italiana* shifted to a joined administration of the Four Powers. See Touval *Somali Nationalism*, pp. 77-83.

investigate the aspirations of Somali communities but rather to establish the extent to which a restoration of Italian rule would have faced local opposition.<sup>20</sup>

During the hearings with the Four Powers Commission, problems related to the restrictive choice offered by the UN were expressed by representatives of local communities. For instance, Islau Mahadalle, the representative of the *Conferenza* before the UN, attended hearings to discuss the *Conferenza* 23-point programme and advanced Italian rule in January 1948. During the discussions, the representatives of the *Conferenza* explained the reasons behind the pro-Italian stance of the association and its members in these terms:

We were hating the Italian government, and were saying ‘May God bring the British Administration!’ We were hearing that the British administration was a justice giver and peace maker... [but today under the BMA] there is not any Somali in this territory who has not been looted or killed... [at least] under the Italians there was freedom of work and of agriculture.<sup>21</sup>

Although aiming at backing Italian rule and thus biased, this quote reveals information regarding the presence of regional interests in *Somalia Italiana*. The agriculturist regions of southern Somalia represented the ‘breadbasket’ of the country.<sup>22</sup> In the 1940s, the leaders of southern socio-political associations were representatives of the most-profitable sector of Somali economy, the same sector that had been targeted by Italian colonial interventions. Moreover, the quote summarised the problematic socioeconomic conditions affecting *Somalia Italiana*,

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<sup>20</sup> The findings of the Commission are published in: Four Power Commission, *Report of the Four Power Commission of Investigation. Former Italian Colonies. Report on Somalia*, (New York; UN, 1948).

<sup>21</sup> The minutes of the hearings between the *Conferenza* and the Commission are collected in: ‘C.F.M./D/I/4/I.C.COM Sixteenth Hearing in Italian Somaliland’, 4<sup>th</sup> February, 1948, author unknown; ‘Four-Power Commission on Somalia: Disturbances in Mogadishu; Report of the Commission’, TNA, FO, 1015/28. I have decided to use the same quotes used by Pankhurst who, due to the biases of Allied propaganda discussed in chapter 1, gives a very different perspective. See Pankhurst, *Ex-Italian Somaliland*, pp.238-9.

According to biographical information collected by the BMA, Islao Mahadalle Mohamed, president of the *Conferenza*, had worked for a colonial Judge in Mogadishu for 19 years. He was believed to be ‘the most important native “cog” in the Italian political machine’; following the 1948 riots in Mogadishu, he was arrested by the BMA for having played ‘a very provocative part in the events’ and eventually released. Author unknown, ‘Biographical notes on Somali political leaders’, undated (presumably mid-1949); TNA, FO, 371/73851.

<sup>22</sup> Lee V. Cassanelli, ‘Explaining the Somali Crisis’, in Cassanelli, Besteman, *The Struggle for Land*, p. 15.

and in particular the riverine regions. Procrastinations within the UN debate caused almost a decade of direct British military administration, which implemented no major reforms or plans and received little support from the metropole. This, coupled with the economic impacts of war efforts, pressurised local agricultural production which had already been shaken by the war and the collapse of colonial economy. Within this context, the options offered at the time by the UN were reduced to a choice between former colonial masters and the BMA. In order to shed light on this context, the next section discusses colonial initiatives and systems of agricultural production, and policies implemented by the BMA.

### 3.3 The war-time, colonial economy and British policies

It is conventionally maintained that the Second World War had tremendous impacts on Africa as, due to the war efforts, African commodities assumed great importance during the war affecting every aspects of African economic and social life. In this way, African colonies were transformed into a systematic source of both military and civilian labour to supply the war effort.<sup>23</sup> Since the mid-1930s *Somalia Italiana* came also to play a subordinate role within Italian plans to attack Ethiopia. However by 1941, this process assumed a different significance due to the collapse of colonial economy, the direct British military administration and the general socioeconomic impoverishment that followed. As the BMA was run on a very limited budget, no major reforms were undertaken to boost local economy, in particular the agricultural sector. As a result of the war and military occupation, fertile regions were subject to fierce competition over resources. This section argues that the measures adopted by the BMA to face this situation proved to be controversial and inadequate and caused resentment among some local communities. It looks at the features of the BMA, the colonial investments in agriculture and system of productions, how the collapse of

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<sup>23</sup> David Killingray, 'Labour Mobilisation in British Colonial Africa for the War Effort, 1939-46', in Killingray, Rathbone, *Africa and the Second World War*.

this system was faced by the BMA, the measures adopted to restore law and order, and local perceptions of the BMA.

### 3.3.1 The BMA

Although the BMA was conceived as a provisory administration to last until the end of the war, its military administration was extended by the protraction of the UN debate on former Italian colonies. For this reason, the BMA ruled former *Somalia Italiana* for almost a decade, from 1941 until 1950, during which, at least until the end of the war, the BMA played the role of occupying power and made use of the infrastructures that had been set up by the Italians to its own advantages. Accordingly, what had been established by the former colonial rule, as economic services, industries, and facilities, were dismantled by the British. For instance, the only railway of the colony, a 100 kilometres rail system that linked the sugar factory in Johwar to Mogadishu and Afgooye, was broken down into pieces and shipped to Kenya. Similarly, locomotives, trucks, vehicles and all the infrastructures that could be removed and re-utilised elsewhere were broke into parts and replaced within the borders of the British Empire.<sup>24</sup>

In many ways, the BMA assumed a distinct exploitative character. As it was a provisory administration, the BMA received little support from the metropole and its sustenance had to be based on local resources. This point was made very clear from the beginning: the exclusive aims of the administration were to ‘maintain law and order, and harness the resources of the country to the Allied war effort’; for this reason, the BMA ‘was required to function at the minimum of cost and had no mandate to introduce large-scale reforms or innovations’.<sup>25</sup> This circumstance had major consequences locally and proved to be critical to the Somali economy. In fact,

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<sup>24</sup> In December 1942, 3,000 Somalis circa were employed by the BMA to dismantling the railway. Additionally, the oil bulk storage and the Marka oil plant were dismantled and shipped abroad. Untitled report, , Lt General Sir William Platt, Political Branch, East African Command, March 1943, J1574/46/46; TNA, FO, 371/35658. Further infrastructures were dismantled during the BMA: the metal bridge in Afgooye; the sea salt production in the Xaafuun peninsula; and few mines were closed down. Del Boca, *Nostalgia delle Colonie*, p. 170.

<sup>25</sup> J.C. Gray, L. Silberman, *The Fate of Italy's Colonies: A Report to the Fabian Colonial Bureau with Contributions by an Observer in Eritrea*, (London: Fabian Publications and Gollancz, 1948), pp. 24-5.

until 1949 the administrative future of *Somalia Italiana* was not certain but pending further UN decisions, and therefore the British did not implement any development programmes in the region at all. With this respect, while a series of reforms and development plans were drafted as a response to African demands in most colonies,<sup>26</sup> none of these plans was drafted in *Somalia Italiana*. On an ideological ground, this circumstance clashed with the Allied propaganda of freeing the Horn of Africa from fascist rule. As discussed in chapter one, while the BMA was established in opposition to the previous regime, the lack of clear plans generated confusion with regards to policy-making and especially in the context of the collapse of colonial economy and social unrest. Both issues were matters of great concern in *Somalia Italiana*. In order to understand the features of this economic crisis, it is necessary to investigate the main characteristics of colonial economic interventions under Italian rule.

### 3.3.2 Colonial investments and systems of production in agriculture

Starting in 1910 and consolidating in the 1920s, Italian colonial economic interventions centred on exploiting the local potential in agriculture. In this sense, initial efforts were made to appropriate the fertile land of southern Somalia in 1890s, which were increased in the 1920s, following the rise of the fascist rule in 1923. Colonial economic plans drafted investments and subsidies from the metropole to increase outputs of agricultural production for export. Large agricultural enterprises and private concessions were established, which adopted two different systems of production, and fostered the production of large-scale crops for exportation especially banana, cotton and sugar.<sup>27</sup> Colonial rule established a monopoly over

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<sup>26</sup> Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, especially chapter 3.

<sup>27</sup> Between 1910 and 1918, an Italian agronomist, Romolo Onor, explored the agriculture potential in southern Somalia. His studies discouraged the establishment of private concessions and monoculture promoting local production. Despite this, colonial rule pushed for private and large enterprises starting from 1905 with scarce results. In 1924, agricultural plans were revived by the new government which promoted a series of concessions that were distributed among private, mostly Italians, settlers. On Onor's study see Hess *Italian Colonialism*, pp. 113-15, and Angelo Del Boca *Gli Italiani in Africa Orientale: Dall'Unità alla Marcia su Roma*, (Bari: Laterza, 1976), p. 830.

import-export and trading licenses chiefly dominated by trade with Italy.<sup>28</sup> In the short-term all these factors contributed to make Somali economy quite dependent on Italy. Moreover, the promotion of the production of commercial plantations hindered the production of small and varied crops and led to a decrease in the competitiveness of the small-holders, of local production, and reduced the diversification of the Somali economy.<sup>29</sup> Additionally, the introduction of monoculture, chiefly banana whose production was linked to trade with Italy exclusively, in the long-term penalised the versatility of Somali agriculture that became subject to seasonal variations and market fluctuations.<sup>30</sup> The next paragraph discusses the two major colonial investments in agriculture which eventually collapsed following the Italian defeat in 1941.

Among the agricultural enterprises, the most important, successful, and, by far, the largest was the *Società Agricola Italo-Somala*<sup>31</sup> (SAIS), a cotton plantation established in 1920 in Jowhar, a fertile area along the Juba River.<sup>32</sup> By 1920, the Jowhar area was transformed into an industrialised agricultural enterprise. At first, the land was divided between pasture and cultivation areas. Subsequently a series of reclamation schemes, large-scale irrigation, and embankment works were undertaken along the river and affected the area under cultivation considerably.<sup>33</sup> A further transformation was made in 1927 when SAIS switched the production from cotton to sugarcane, set up a sugar factory and built a railway system to transport the production of sugar from Jowhar to the harbour in Mogadishu.

SAIS adopted a production system that was characterised by a division of labour modelled on the pre-colonial client-cultivators system. Before colonial occupation, agriculturalist communities enjoyed food self-sufficiency and produced

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<sup>28</sup> On colonial agricultural policy during the fascist era see Hess, *Italian Colonialism*, chapter 7.

<sup>29</sup> Menkhaus, 'From Feast to Famine', p. 141.

<sup>30</sup> See Christian Webersik, 'Fighting for the Plenty: the Banana Trade in Southern Somalia', *Oxford Development Studies*, 33:1 (2005), pp. 83-4.

<sup>31</sup> Italo-Somali Agricultural Enterprise.

<sup>32</sup> The founder of SAIS, Prince Luigi Amedeo Duke of Abruzzi claimed to have reached agreements with the local populations in order to exploit 15,000 hectares -which later became 25,000- for a period of 99 years. Del Boca, *La Conquista dell'Impero*, p. 82.

<sup>33</sup> For more details see Hess, *Italian Colonialism*, pp. 163-4.



food surplus for trading,<sup>34</sup> due to ‘diversified and productive system of agriculture’ which included the use of sophisticated techniques,<sup>35</sup> and a system of food storage.<sup>36</sup> The local system of production included labourers, usually belonging to minority groups, holding position of clients. The relationship between clients and patrons was regulated through a social system in which the clients, labourers and minority groups became an integral part, although subordinated members, of the clan structure. Within this framework, landowners could possess a few slaves whose rights and obligations were regulated by the social system.<sup>37</sup>

In establishing large agricultural enterprise, SAIS replicated this model. As argued by Cassanelli, this system established a series of regulations that provided labourers with a certain degree of protection and security and regulated the relationship between clients and masters. In this sense, the crop production system in use by SAIS was:

a paternalistic system which managed workers by guaranteeing security of tenure, regulating social behaviour, and recognizing the reciprocal rights and obligations of both supervisors and workers.<sup>38</sup>

Specifically, the production system at SAIS on the one hand was regularised land-tenure and secured labourers’ rights and obligations, but on the other, it allowed a certain degree of autonomy to labourers. Under SAIS, labourers were required to cultivate half their concession with a fixed crop to be sold at a fixed price to the enterprise, while the other half could be planted according to the labourers’ needs.<sup>39</sup> In this way, the system guaranteed a limited, degree of security to the labourers and their families, and the enterprise did quite well in the 1920s and the 1930s.

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<sup>34</sup> Menkhaus, ‘From Feast to Famine’, p. 137.

<sup>35</sup> See Luling *Somali Sultanate*, chapter 8.

<sup>36</sup> Early 1900s accounts of travels in the area by a commission of the Italian Anti Slavery Society provide useful information on the issue, food supplies were stored into pits called *silò* or *got*. L. Robecchi Bricchetti *Dal Benadir. Lettere Illustrate alla Società Antischiavista D’Italia*, (Milan, 1934), p. 92.

<sup>37</sup> Lee V. Cassanelli, ‘The Ending of Slavery in Italian Somalia’, in Suzanne Miers, Richard Roberts (eds.), *The End of Slavery in Africa*, (Madison and London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), p. 314.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 326-7.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*.

In addition to this system of production, SAIS relied on coercive elements in order to establish a firm control over its labourers. Within this framework, the role played by the SAIS managers was central. For instance, even today, the founder of SAIS, a prince related to the then Italian royal family, is remembered for his strict authoritarianism. As one interviewee recalled, the founder of SAIS ‘was a proper *fascista* [not just ideologically but meaning an undemocratic, strict person, demanding obedience] until the day he died.’<sup>40</sup> The autocratic features that characterised SAIS managers became even more evident in 1943 when the news of the fall of fascist government in Italy was followed by some enthusiasm among Somali communities. As a reaction, the Italians at SAIS threatened acts of violence and revenge upon the ones who expressed anti-fascist sympathies:

Fascism at S.A.I.S. appears to be getting into full and open swing. Various recent and overt acts such as the reproving of employees for not giving the Fascist salute, and failure on the part of Italians to listen to any but Axis broadcasts, tend to confirm previous reports. There is also reason to believe that this Fascist cell had considerable influence in Mogadishu, rather than, as one would suppose, the other way round.<sup>41</sup>

Italian dominion at SAIS was not without problems as relations with the labourers remained very tense during the BMA. In spite of the fact that during the British occupation the SAIS was the only industry that managed to maintain its production to pre-war standards, the British reported high degrees of dissatisfaction among its labourers. Although no acts of sabotage were registered as they were in the private concessions, particular discontent was reported with regards to working conditions. For instance, in 1947, after a series of complaints, representatives of SAIS labourers were met by the local British authorities to negotiate improvements on working conditions. During the talks, the labourers ‘were embarrassingly outspoken in their remarks stating that they placed no reliance on Italian promises and

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<sup>40</sup> Interview, 15<sup>th</sup> March 2008.

<sup>41</sup> Author unknown, ‘Extract from Somalia Intelligence Summary No. 4 for Period Ending 12 Dec 43’, 13<sup>th</sup> December 1943, ref. no. S/37A/15; TNA, WO, 230/319.

that they could see no evidence of a change of heart in Italian policy towards them'.<sup>42</sup> For this reason, they resorted to strikes as a form of protest against their masters.

The personal position held by the Director of SAIS, a man with a particular 'grip of his labour' according to the British records, proved critical for the enterprise to continue its business. In fact, labourers were likely to stop working when the Director of SAIS was away. In this sense, the most successful strike organised by SAIS labourers, which lasted a week, happened when the Director was on leave.<sup>43</sup> Once the Director returned to work, he agreed to hold negotiation with the labourers' representative for the improvement of working conditions on the ground that labourers returned to work. By mixing negotiation and coercion, SAIS managed to maintain a firm control over its production and labourers who returned back to work.<sup>44</sup>

Conversely, Italian rule in the plantations, the second major investment in agriculture, resorted to more direct, systematic violence and 'policing' systems. Since the 1910s, a series of European private concessions was granted in Jannaale, a site nearby the Somali coastal town Marka, and along the Juba River. By 1922, the number of European concessions and the land under cultivation increased exponentially: if two concessions occupying an area of 1,500 hectares were functioning in Jannaale in the 1910s, there were one hundred thirty-eight concessions that occupied 26,500 hectares in 1940.<sup>45</sup> The shift was mainly due to a new colonial policy adopted by the fascist governor. Appointed in 1923, the governor launched a programme for the 'fascistisation' of the arable land of southern Somalia thereby distributing agricultural concessions among militant fascists who had joined the colonial occupation of Somalia. In reward for taking part in the campaigns for colonial occupation, colonial authority issued a new regulation on land-ownership

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<sup>42</sup> Chief Administrator, W. M. Donaldson, 'Somalia Political Intelligence Report No. 4', 14<sup>th</sup> October 1947, ref no. 3046/II/74; 'Somalia: Monthly Political Intelligence Summaries', TNA WO 230/207.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid..

<sup>44</sup> Ibid..

<sup>45</sup> Nicola Labanca, *Oltremare. Storia dell'Espansione Coloniale Italiana*, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2007), p. 319.

that made ‘unused lands’ property of the colonial state,<sup>46</sup> and distributed slots of agricultural land among the concessionaires.<sup>47</sup> By favouring monocultures, colonial investments pursued an industrialisation of agricultural production for export trade. As illustrated in Table 3.1, the area of land under colonial investments increased dramatically within a decade.<sup>48</sup>

	<b>Cultivation in the early 1920s (in hectares)</b>	<b>Cultivation in 1930 (in hectares)</b>
<b>Cotton</b>	100	9850
<b>Castor oil</b>	73	3391
<b>Maize</b>	320	11372
<b>Sugarcane</b>	2	651
<b>Bananas</b>	45	1235

**Table. 3.1** The actual production of bananas increased from 447 quintals in 1928 to 16884 quintals in 1931. Data compiled from De Vecchi di Val Cismon, *Orizzonti D’Impero*, pp. 324-25.

During colonial rule, forms of forced labour were introduced in order to overcome the scarcity of labour that affected cultivation. In *Somalia Italiana*, as private concessions struggled to recruit labourers, colonial government drafted new forms of contract with the aim to legalise the recruitment of labourers for the plantations in 1929.<sup>49</sup> By regulating the hiring process, these contracts promoted forced labour through a system of ‘quota’ which prescribed that each community

<sup>46</sup> See Marco G. Guadagni, ‘Colonial Origins of the Public Domain in Southern Somalia (1892-1912),’ *Journal of African Law*, 22, (1978).

<sup>47</sup> Del Boca, *La conquista dell’impero*, pp. 62-67.

<sup>48</sup> Cesare Maria De Vecchi di Val Cismon *Orizzonti D’Impero. Cinque Anni in Somalia*, (Milan: Mondadori, 1935), pp. 324-5.

<sup>49</sup> Hess, *Italian Colonialism*, p. 166. On the issue of forced labour under colonial rule see findings published by the then secretary of the fascist party in Somalia: Marcello Serrazanetti, *Considerazioni sulla Nostra Attività Coloniale in Somalia*, (Bologna: Tip. La Rapida, 1933). Extracts of the report have been published in Giorgio Rochat, *Il Colonialismo*, (Turin: Loescher Editore, 1973), pp. 148-52.

living nearby the cultivation area had to supply a certain number of labourers who would move and serve in the plantations on either temporary or permanent terms.

Modelled on similar structural patterns in use in the *latifundia* of southern Italy<sup>50</sup> and in colonial plantations in Portuguese colonies, like Brazil or Mozambique,<sup>51</sup> the division of labour in the Italian plantations centred on the role played by the concessionaires' agents.<sup>52</sup> Under the name of *caporali* in the Italian plantations (from Latin *caput*, i.e. boss), these agents guaranteed high levels of efficiency and productivity by managing the hiring process, the actual distribution of labour and the surveillance of the labourers. As they took a share of labourers' remuneration which was based on the production, they were interested in achieving high standards of daily outputs.<sup>53</sup> Where in colonial Mozambique these agents (the *capitão*) were Mestiços or Portuguese, in *Somalia Italiana* they belonged to local communities and their position assumed particular importance in relation to the labour system in the Italian plantations. Due to the scarcity of manpower and the constant difficulty in recruiting labourers, local agents who were highly knowledgeable of the context and work production, became central in the recruiting process.<sup>54</sup> In establishing coercive labour, as noted by Declich, Italians made good use of the inequalities of Somali society by targeting minority groups that held a subordinate role within the local social structure.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, by seeking the complicity of communities' leaders, the populations of Bantu origins belonging to recent settlements or to settlements of slaves, came to be the ones who bore most of the burden of forced labour.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> On contemporary form of *caporalato* in Italy see Alessandro Leogrande, *Uomini e Caporali. Viaggio tra i Nuovi Schiavi nelle Campagne del Sud*, (Milan: Mondadori, 2008).

<sup>51</sup> See Malyn Newitt, *A History of Mozambique*, (Bloomington: Indian University Press, 1995), especially chapters 16-17.

<sup>52</sup> Angelo Del Boca, 'Un Agronomo all'Equatore', *Studi Piacentini*, 35(2004), p. 220.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid..

<sup>54</sup> Ibid..

<sup>55</sup> Francesca Declich, 'Unfree Labour, Forced Labour and Resistance among the Zigula of the Lower Juba', in Edward A. Alpers, Gwyn Campbell, Michael Salman (eds), *Resisting Bondage in Indian Ocean Africa and Asia*, (New York: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>56</sup> Cassanelli, 'The Ending of Slavery'; Catherine Besteman, 'The Invention of Gosha: Slavery, Colonialism and Stigma in Somali History', in Ahmed (ed), *The Invention of Somalia*; Declich 'Gendered Narratives', Luling, *Somali Sultanate*, pp. 152-4.

### 3.3.3 The war impacts on agriculture and labour policy

As a result of war developments, the local colonial economy collapsed in 1941 and this became a matter of great concern to the BMA which did not possess means and resources to implement alternative measures to this system. Additionally, following the defeat of Italians, labourers mutinied against the working regime. As this section discusses, the labour policies adopted by the BMA became very controversial.

As highlighted in the previous section, the economic system centred on agricultural production that was characterised by Italian control over import-export and trading licenses, by dependency on subsidies from the metropole, and by a strong link to trade with Italy. This restricted and monopolised system of production came to an abrupt end with the war and so the immediate effects of the British occupation were dramatic: two-thirds of the cultivated land was abandoned and looted; trade and economic links with Italy interrupted; the system of subsidies from the metropole stopped. One of the first British reports drafted in 1941 captured this sudden situation:

The whole economic structure of the colony was unsound to the extent of absurdity and the Government itself a mere façade. The country is quite incapable of supporting more than a fifth of the present population and it existed, at the expense of the Italian taxpayer, on subsidies of kind and cash from Rome.<sup>57</sup>

In controlling the area, the BMA was required to make the region under occupation self-supportive. Plans were soon drafted to encourage agricultural outputs however this was made difficult by the dramatic conditions of colonial economy and by competition over resources that followed the war which eventually affected Somali cultivators and riverine communities the most. In facing these conflicts, the BMA adopted a policy of military commitment that will be discussed in the next section. Additionally, the BMA drafted measures that would make the colony self-supporting by stimulating the outputs of agricultural sectors. This policy did not come without problems especially with regards to the labour system in the

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<sup>57</sup> Author unknown, Headquarters O.E.T.A., Mogadishu, 12<sup>th</sup> April 1941; TNA, WO 230/7.

plantations. As soon as the British occupied *Somalia Italiana*, it became readily apparent that labour conditions, especially in the plantations, were of the most miserable kind:

labour conditions in this area ... were so vicious that it is difficult to understand how any civilised nation could support them.<sup>58</sup>

Another problem was constituted by the fact that during the war farms had been looted systematically and agricultural infrastructures and system of production heavily damaged as a result. Moreover, once the BMA had been established in the area, labourers refused to go back to work in the fields due to the forceful labour system adopted by the Italians:

The present position is that the local native population, from whom the labourers were drawn, refuse point blank to work for an Italian of any kind or in any capacity.<sup>59</sup>

Despite these clear difficulties and in order to make the colony self-sufficient, the BMA pushed the agricultural sector to restart the production by introducing a wage-labour system commonly in use in other colonies at the time. As pointed out by Killingray and Rathbone, the increasing relevance of African raw materials to European economies during the war-time led colonial administrations to force thousands of peasants into state-regulated labour system.<sup>60</sup> In Somalia, similar measures were taken to address both farm labourers and groups of 'unemployed' Somalis. Accordingly, on the one hand, forced measures were (re)introduced to induce labourers to return to the fields. As it emerges from the following quote, these implied an active, forceful British role:

...[it might be possible] to resort to force to compel the labourers to return to work on the farms, urgent as is the need to get the farms working again during the present planting season which is now upon us...we should meet with more than passive resistance and should create an atmosphere of unrest which might spread and involve us in a military commitment...the political officers concerned [have

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<sup>58</sup> Author unknown, Headquarters O.E.T.A., Mogadishu, 12<sup>th</sup> April 1941; TNA, WO 230/7.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid..

<sup>60</sup> Killingray, Rathbone, 'Introduction', p. 12.

been instructed] to use all their influence and persuasive powers to get the labourers back on to the farms...<sup>61</sup>

On the other hand, the labour policy applied to ‘unemployed’ Somalis of the urban area and in particular in Mogadishu:

[As compelling labourers to go back to work in the field] will be a slow process...[it would be possible] to draft on to them some the 2000 or more unemployed artisans in Mogadishu. They are not farmers and never will be; but it is better for their morale that they should sweat in the fields and earn some portion of their daily bread than sit in the slums of Mogadishu.<sup>62</sup>

Labour policies adopted by the BMA contributed to create a certain resentment of local agriculturist communities which by no means were given free labour choice. As the British labour policies were drafted on temporary terms, labourers’ status and conditions were not secured in any way. A certain sense of having been badly treated by the BMA clearly emerges from the report of the Four Powers Commission that met representatives of Somali communities in 1948 especially among representative the pro-Italian political front. In this sense, the former colonial rule might have appeared more stable in terms of security and protection for cultivators. Accordingly, a sense of nostalgia for colonial time was recorded by Luling during her fieldwork in southern Somalia in the late 1960s.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, arbitrary measures adopted by the BMA to face social unrest in the area provoked further disagreement as next section illustrates.

### 3.3.4 ‘Restoring law and order’: the pacification campaign in Somalia

Despite the quick defeat of the Italian army and the British discourse of an ‘easy victory’ over Italians in the Horn of Africa, the British occupation of *Somalia*

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<sup>61</sup> Author unknown, Headquarters O.E.T.A, Mogadishu, 12<sup>th</sup> April 1941; TNA, WO 230/7.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid..

<sup>63</sup> The author refers to the area of Afgooye exclusively. A completely different situation was registered in Janaale where most of Italian concessions were situated: ‘The hatred of forced recruitment in the Afgooye area was not so much for local concessionaries, as for work at Jannaale (Genale), the much more important development 70 kilometres downstream. This reached its height during the fascist period...The workers there suffered appalling conditions...’ Luling, *Somali Sultanate*, p. 152.



*Italiana* did not come without problems. A matter of great concern to the BMA was the degree of tension and unrest throughout the Somali-speaking regions. Where the Italians were defeated in June 1941, some soldiers who had fought for the Italian army continued to resist the British occupation. Others, who had become suddenly unemployed, formed armed groups and began to loot farms and raid cattle.<sup>64</sup> These conflicts affected colonial possessions and more generally, all the farms and cultivations.

In order to appreciate the features and scale of conflicts and their local effects, a comparison with recent events in Somalia may be useful. Following the collapse of the Somali state in 1991, the country has been hit by a series of civil conflicts that heavily targeted the agriculturalist clans and population living in between the Webi Shebelli and Juba rivers. Due to a concentration of economic agricultural resources in the area, thus the nickname ‘the bread-basket of Somalia’, and to a certain discrimination towards the local communities who are seen as the descendants of slaves, these regions have suffered the most from the war and from the struggle to control resources.<sup>65</sup> In the 1940s, these regions were subject to similar patterns of violence.

In 1941, ‘restoring law and order’ represented a difficult task to the BMA that lacked both practical and human resources to face conflicts effectively:

[...] reports from all centres in the Mogadishu Division indicate that there is still a large number of rifles and even machine guns, and ammunition in the hands of deserters from the Italian forces. The native population generally is possessed of considerable quantities of materials and goods looted from Italian houses and farms and they are reluctant to restore this stolen property merely on an order from a Political officer unsupported by armed force. The areas involved are so large that the present garrisons of the places where Political Officers are stationed

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<sup>64</sup> The BMA believed that disbanded soldiers constituted a matter of great concern: ‘A contributory factor to this discontent is the large number of young men, now unemployed, who formerly served in the Italian forces, now returned to their villages, they have spent their savings and see no means of obtaining future subsistence.’ Lieut. Colonel G.S.I., ‘Extract from 12 Div. Intelligence Summary No. 32’, E.A. Command Headquarters, 12<sup>th</sup> May 1942, file no. IR/46/1/5; TNA WO 230/7.

<sup>65</sup> For the effects of the civil wars on southern Somalia see Cassanelli, Bestman, *The Struggle for Land*.

are quite insufficient to provide the patrols which are necessary to recover arms and ammunition and stolen property and generally to restore order.<sup>66</sup>

The collapse of the colonial economy, the temporary interruption of local trade and imposition of war economy, and the series of lootings caused a fierce competition over resources that rapidly spread throughout the region. In particular, the border area at the tri-junction between Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya was a matter of great concern to the BMA. Groups of armed bands became quite successful in these activities.<sup>67</sup> Similar activities involved members of the Somali police as, for instance, in the British Somaliland some *illalos*, the local Somali police force, were reported to function regularly during the day and to carry out unofficial looting at night.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, due to an easier access to war weapons that were left by or looted from the armies, conflicts assumed an intense degree that continued long after the defeat of the Italians in 1941.<sup>69</sup> For instance, between 1948 and 1949, the BMA reported more than hundreds of people killed in inter-regional, or 'tribal', conflicts.<sup>70</sup>

In part, the degree of regional violence was due to the British policy of military commitment to face conflicts. In particular, this policy resorted to acts of retaliation and collective punishments as a response to raids and lootings. Once the BMA identified the clan or sub-clan family of certain looters, it punished that clan section by confiscating their cattle, belongings and, in some cases, by setting villages on fire.<sup>71</sup> As typical war measures in use by occupying powers, these policies had major consequences in the area. First, as looters were often disbanded soldiers, it was

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<sup>66</sup> Deputy Chief Political Officer OETA (name unknown), 'Headquarters, Advance Force', Mogadishu, 24<sup>th</sup> March 1941; TNA, WO 230/7.

<sup>67</sup> The Chief Civil Affairs Officer (name unknown), 'Border Patrols – Jubaland Frontier', East Africa Command Headquarters, Nairobi, 9<sup>th</sup> June, 1943; TNA, WO 230/7.

<sup>68</sup> Assistant A.P.O., W. H. Taylor, 'Report on Safari to Chimer', El Carre, 26<sup>th</sup> June 1942; TNA, WO 230/7.

<sup>69</sup> The war brought accessibility to military weapons and the BMA accused the Italians of having deliberately distributed arms and ammunitions to Somalis before fleeing the region. Kenya Information Officer, (initials unknown) Davies, 'Kenya Information Office', 10<sup>th</sup> January 1942; TNA, WO 230/7.

<sup>70</sup> Author unknown, 'Incidents in Somalia during 1948-1949', undated, Appendix 'B' ref. no. EAX/CR/10235/28/9(OPS); TNA, WO, 230/319.

<sup>71</sup> These practices were widely in use in the British protectorate and under Italian colonial rule, see for instance John G. Drysdale, *History of the Somaliland Camel Corps* (unpublished, 1935), Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies at Rhodes House, Oxford, MSS. Afr. s. 552. Hanley's novel based on the time he spent in the area as British soldier provides useful insights: Gerald Hanley, *Warriors. Life and Death among the Somalis*, (London: Eland, 1993).

very difficult to establish a connection between them and their clan leaving open the possibility of punishing groups that were not connected with the lootings. Second, collective punishments enforced a discourse based on clan according to which the clan family was made responsible of the acts of their members even when it did not have control over their actions. Third, it increased the level of discontent and tension rather than diminished it as these policies did not engage directly with the socioeconomic conditions upon which conflicts developed.

Due to violent conflicts and responses, the BMA assumed an inherently military character that reflected the need for establishing control of the area. As argued by Anderson and Killingray, the police and more generally the armed forces played a key role in the colonial attempt to enforce forms of hegemony in colonial Africa.<sup>72</sup> On a similar ground, one of the first concerns of the BMA was to create a police force, the Somali Gendarmerie which would replace the previous colonial force, and would be used to enforce British rule and to pacify the regions. The use of the Somali Gendarmerie for military purposes, however, contributed to increasing local resentment. As discussed in the previous chapter, once founded, the Somali Gendarmerie soon became a highly politicised force to the point that 75% of policemen stationed in Mogadishu were members of the Somali Youth League. In fact, scholars believe that the collusion between the police and the BMA was not casual but reflected a preferential policy adopted by the British according to which party membership became instrumental for employment within the administration.<sup>73</sup> Cassanelli takes this argument even further by stating that starting from the 1940s, southern communities were marginalised among police force until the Barre's regime.<sup>74</sup>

The combination of an administration that relied heavily on armed forces and a police force that was highly politicised contributed to an increase in tension

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<sup>72</sup> David M. Anderson, David Killingray, 'Consent, coercion and colonial control: policing the empire, 1830-1940', David M. Anderson, David Killingray (eds.), *Policing the Empire. Government, Authority and Control, 1830-1940*, (Manchester: University Press, 1991).

<sup>73</sup> Castagno, 'Somali Republic', in Coleman, Rosberg (eds.), *Political Parties*, p. 522.

<sup>74</sup> Lee V. Cassanelli, 'Somali Land Resource Issues in Historical Perspective', in Walter Clarke and Jeffrey Herbst, *Learning from Somalia: The Lessons of Armed Humanitarian Intervention*, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1997), p. 70.

between the Somali Youth League and the opposition parties representing agriculturist communities. The reports of the Four Powers Commission of investigation are useful in shedding light on this tension. For instance, one of the representatives of the *Conferenza* denounced to the UN that the BMA was working in collusion with the League:

Wherever there is a British Officer, next to him is a Somali Youth League member, either as a boy, a personal servant, or as an interpreter, and this is why we have trouble.<sup>75</sup>

Another point to be made is in relation to the conflict over resources and the enforcement of political competition by the UN decision to send a special commission to decide upon the future of former Italian colonies. Recent studies on the interplay between ethnic conflicts, access to resources and state power in the Horn of Africa, have investigated the extent to which competition over scarce resources affects and shapes relations among groups across the regions.<sup>76</sup> In particular, John Markakis has illustrated how competition over resources assumes a political significance due to the decisive role played by the state in resolving conflicts.<sup>77</sup> Similarly, in *Somalia Italiana* conflicts over resources were brought into the political domain by the UN decision to investigate the ‘wishes’ of colonial subjects and thus, by forcing the formation of political representations. Moreover, the collusion between the state authority, i.e. the BMA, and one of the most important political associations of the time and competitor before the UN, i.e. the Somali Youth League, contributed to aggravate the degree of conflicts. The report of Four Powers Commission indicates that the major concerns of the ‘pro-Italia’ were in relation to land and agriculture as these represented the most profitable economic sectors of the time. By the end of the 1940s, these concerns had clearly become politicised as expressed by one of the representative of the ‘pro-Italia’ before the Commission:

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<sup>75</sup> Quoted in Pankhurst, *Ex-Italian Somaliland*, p. 241.

<sup>76</sup> Katsuyoshi Fukui, John Markakis (eds.), *Ethnicity & Conflict in the Horn of Africa*, (London: James Currey, 1994).

<sup>77</sup> John Markakis, ‘Ethnic Conflict & the State in the Horn of Africa’, in *Ibid.*, pp. 220-4.

‘Their own land [of the Somali Youth League] is not here; this land is our’.<sup>78</sup> Within this context, the development of Italian propaganda exacerbated the tension between the Somali Youth League and the ‘pro-Italian’ as next section illustrates.

### **3.4 Constructing consent by amassing dissent: Italian post-war propaganda and effects**

The previous section argued that aspects of the British policy adopted in *Somalia Italiana* proved to be not only inadequate in addressing the critical social and economic conditions of the region but that they also created some localised discontent. The decision to send a special commission of the UN to investigate local aspirations pushed local communities to organise politically. Among these communities, the Italians were more advantaged as they possessed means to advance their interests and had developed campaigns of propaganda with the aim to mobilise a political front that eventually backed Italy before the Four Powers Commission. The consolidation of the pro-Italian political front posits some questions regarding the strategies adopted by the Italians in order to promote consent. Recently, Gramsci’s notion of consent – the masses’ acquiescent attitude to the direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group which enjoys a hegemonic position in the system of production<sup>79</sup> – has been adopted to investigate colonial rule in Africa and India. With this respect, the historians Engels and Marks have encouraged colonial historiography to work beyond the conventional duality of colonial dominion and resistance in order to shed light on the interaction between colonial strategies to amass consent and local responses to and/or usage of these strategies.<sup>80</sup> By looking closely at these strategies, it is possible to explore the

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<sup>78</sup> Abuker Hussein, vice-president of the Hidaitha ul Islam (association member of the *Conferenza*), before the Four Power Commission. Quoted in Pankhurst, *Ex-Italian Somaliland*, p. 241.

<sup>79</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del Carcere. Vol. I: Quaderni I(XVI)- 5(IX)*, (Turin: Einaudi, 1975).

<sup>80</sup> Dagmar Engels, Shula Marks, ‘Introduction: Hegemony in a Colonial Context’, in Dagmar Engels, Shula Marks (eds.), *Contesting Colonial Hegemony: State and Society in Africa and India* (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 1-7.

multiple means through which colonial dominion, or modern regimes,<sup>81</sup> live and grow.

In the 1940s, Italian strategies at constructing consent managed to amass and mobilise a political front at the time in which – during the British occupation of *Somalia Italiana* – Italian colonial power was, technically speaking, not hegemonic in the area. This circumstance raises questions regarding the features and motives behind this political front. In addressing these issues, this section discusses features of Italian propaganda. It is argued that by amassing dissent against the BMA, these strategies attempted to consolidate pro-Italian backing. They consisted of a series of promises regarding future administration, distribution of sums of money, and accusations against the BMA, revival of contacts with sections of Somali society that were set up during the colonial rule. The overall result of Italian propaganda was a radicalisation of the division between the Somali Youth League and the ‘pro-Italia’.

### 3.4.1 Features of Italian propaganda and reactions

In enhancing its colonial interests, the post-war Italian government drafted a politically-elaborate strategy that sought alliances with community leaders. Specifically, this policy aimed at the revival of pre-war ties between the Italians and the waged-leaders that constituted the base of the Italian system of dominion analysed by Hess.<sup>82</sup> Sums of money, or so called ‘lucrative donations’, were distributed among pre-war waged-leaders and, in particular, among riverine communities that had been subject to looting during the war and British occupation.<sup>83</sup> By doing so, the Italian strategy was two-fold: on the one hand, it provided communities’ leaders with money at critical time; on the other hand, it attempted to buy off their support to the detriment of the BMA that was blamed for the impoverishment of socioeconomic conditions in the area.

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<sup>81</sup> Sara Rich Dorman, ‘Inclusion and Exclusion: NGOs and Politics in Zimbabwe’ (Ph.D. thesis, St Antony’s College, 2001), pp. 18-21.

<sup>82</sup> Hess, *Italian Colonialism*, chapter 5.

<sup>83</sup> Telegram from Italian Foreign Office to Mogadishu, 11 September 1948, Rome; ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa19, busta 11.

In the late 1940s, the ways through which ‘lucrative donations’ were distributed followed a simple and defined structure. Every month, the Italian government allocated certain sums of money to be used by some high-rank colonial clerks or key figures such as the municipal secretary and commissariat of Mogadishu, the Chief Judge of the colony.<sup>84</sup> In order to keep this policy confidential, money was sent to a private company, namely De Vincezi, which managed electrical power supply in the region. Under the government’s instructions, the company put the money at the Italian agents’ disposal and kept the books that were sent to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>85</sup>

At the core of Italian strategies was the belief that the communities’ leaders held a solid hegemonic position locally. By reviving the pre-war wage-scheme, these strategies provided leaders with material means and reinforce their positions so that they would mobilise their communities in favour of the Italians:

In spite of the war, the British occupation and the rise of new ideas [i.e. nationalism], the position of leaders and sheiks is still strong... in most cases, they support us. Our action has to provide balance, coordination and moderation and should by no means hinder the power of local leaders and sheiks.<sup>86</sup>

Another central theme of the Italian propaganda centred on the promise that the pre-war salary-scheme would be re-enforced and financial assistance to communities’ leaders increased in case of a restoration of Italian rule via international mandate.<sup>87</sup> This constituted a crucial part of Italian propaganda: during the BMA, communities’ leaders who were suspected of insubordination or accused of looting were suspended from the salary-scheme.<sup>88</sup> Further promises concerned the payment of colonial soldiers for their services under Italian army interrupted by the

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<sup>84</sup> They were respectively: Calzia, Beritelli, Dell’Olio. Author unknown, ‘Report on Intensive Italian Propaganda within Somalia’, undated (presumably 1947/1948); ‘Disturbances in Somalia. Riots and Massacres at Mogadishu 1948’, TNA, FO 371/69414.

<sup>85</sup> Author unknown, ‘Telegram from the Italian Foreign Office to Mogadishu’, 11<sup>th</sup> September 1948 Rome, ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 19, busta 11.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid..

<sup>87</sup> The colonial institution of waged-leaders was fully restored and the salaries increased 3-fold. Castagno, ‘Somali Republic’, in Coleman, Rosberg (eds.), *Political Parties*, p. 525.

<sup>88</sup> This circumstance is recalled by the former Prime Minister Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke who served for the BMA in the 1940s. Samatar, Samatar, ‘Somalis as Africa’s First Democrats’, p. 12.

British occupation.<sup>89</sup> By stressing these themes, Italian propaganda attempted to compete directly with the BMA and to develop its strategies in opposition to British policies. This was mainly due to the fact that local communities were expected to make a choice between former colonial rule and BMA before the UN.

The decision to send a special commission caused the development of political competition between different groups among which Italians were materially advantaged. This had the consequence of creating tension between the pro-Italia and the Somali Youth League and to radicalise the division between the two groups. The role played by managers of agricultural enterprises was central in developing Italian propaganda as they retained key positions within local system of production. In this way, the area around SAIS, the largest agricultural enterprise, became one of the headquarters of the pro-Italian political front which by 1947 was quite solid. Clashes between them and the Somali Youth League became frequent as reported by the BMA:

In the Villabruzzi District [i.e. at SAIS], where there is no doubt that the P.B.U.[i.e. the Patriotic Benefit Union] receives a great deal of encouragement from the General Manager of S.A.I.S., much of the C.A.O.'s time is wasted by the constant bickering between the two parties [the Somali Youth League and the P.B.U.], particularly at the village of Hawadle.<sup>90</sup>

On a different level, Italian propaganda could rely on links and alliances with local communities' leaders that had been established before the war. The way pre-colonial patron-client relations had been used and modified by colonial rule and eventually co-opted in post-independence African states, constitutes a well-studied research theme in African studies.<sup>91</sup> In Somalia, Italian strategies made use of similar forms of patronage, whose nature varied according to circumstance, in provision of the visit of the Four Power Commission. For example, links between the Italians and

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<sup>89</sup> Director of Civil Affairs (name unknown), War Office, London, 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1947, ref. n. 2a/IM/450; 'Italian Propaganda Directed to the Former Italian Colonies; Payments Made by the Italian Government to the Natives of Somalia', TNA, FO 1015/31.

<sup>90</sup> Chief Administrator, W. M. Donaldson, 'Somalia Political Intelligence Report – No. 3', 31<sup>st</sup> July 1947, ref. no. 3046/II/66; TNA, WO 230/207.

<sup>91</sup> See Bruce J. Berman, 'Ethnicity, Patronage and the African State: the Politics of Uncivil Nationalism', *African Affairs*, 97, 1998.



Olol Dinle, leader or sultan of Qallafo, are well-known by oral tradition.<sup>92</sup> These links dated back the 1920s and 1930s, when Italians provided arms and protection to Olol Dinle and his community and in turn, the Somali leader supported the Italian attack on Ethiopia and provided labourers supply for the colonial plantations.<sup>93</sup> During the war, the leader became very famous in Italy for his contribution to the attack and occupation of Ethiopia.<sup>94</sup> The bond between the two became solid to the point that, once the Italians were defeated by the British, Olol Dinle continued to lead armed resistance against the BMA and for this reason was arrested by the British administration.<sup>95</sup>

The close links between Olol Dinle and the Italians are perhaps exceptional but their nature reveals how similar connections were revived and reused in the 1940s: on the one hand, Italian strategies attempted to increase support before the UN commission; on the other, by supporting the restoration of Italian rule, some communities' leaders, who had fought together with Italian army, attempted to secure their position in the event of acts of revenge from Ethiopia or the BMA.<sup>96</sup>

Once released from prison in 1947, Olol Dinle mobilised pro-Italian support in the region before the UN visit and, for this reason, had to face the opposition of the local branch of the Somali Youth League which had been set up in the area during his absence. Conflicts between the two political fronts became frequent. The following extract is a report on one of these clashes led respectively by the two leaders Olol Dinle, the president of the League, Mohamed Haji Hussein, who travelled all the way from Mogadishu to confront the situation in person:

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<sup>92</sup> Research notes, March 2008, Rome.

<sup>93</sup> Commissario Regionale [Regional Commissioner], Scarpa, 17<sup>th</sup> October 1922, Baidoa [Baydhabo], n. 3694; ASDMAE carteggio Somalia, posizione 89.9. See also Del Boca, *La Conquista dell'Impero*, pp. 208-11.

<sup>94</sup> Del Boca *La Conquista dell'Impero*, pp.508-9. For more details on the role played by Olol Dinle and his men in the war see Rodolfo Graziani *Il Fronte Sud*, (Milan: Mondadori, 1938), especially chapters 9-12.

<sup>95</sup> So the BMA reported in 1947: 'Olol Dinle... is no longer at large. Early in July it was considered that he was a potential danger, intelligence reports indicated that he was endeavouring to regain authority in the Shebelli area, the result being intrigues and bickering which were closely associates with his activities....[due to his contacts with a band of armed Italians] it was considered that Olol Dinle be put in a camp for native political prisoners...[in] Mogadishu'. Sgd. D.G. Daniels, Office of the Military Administrator, Mogadishu, 18<sup>th</sup> September 1942, ref. no. 680/30; TNA, WO, 230/7.

<sup>96</sup> In fact, Olol Dinle died in prison in Ethiopia in the late 1940s. Interview, 15<sup>th</sup> March 2008.

Early in the morning a crowd numbering several hundreds marched into Callafo [i.e. Qelafo] from the River area. They had come to welcome the Sultan [Olol Dinle] back and were singing songs in his honour. They were well behaved and eventually sat down on the embankment just outside the town. An hour or so later another large crowd, this time of S.Y.L. supporters, was seen arriving from the River area. Both crowds were well armed with sticks, and it was seen that the second crowd would pass very near to the first crowd, and it was feared that a clash might occur, with the possibility of its developing into tribal fight on a large scale, with about 1,000 people involved... Sultan Olol Dinle and Mr. Haji Mohamed Hussein were sent for by the... [British Commissioner and he was] given direct orders to march their supporters by different routes... Four whole days were spent by the ...[BMA] in fruitless discussions with the president of the S.Y.L....[it has been] agreed to their requests to open new Club Houses in the River Area on condition that they would do everything possible to keep the peace, and urge the tribesmen who were members of the S.Y.L. to obey orders of the Administration, which are issued through the medium of the Chiefs... It was then decided to hold an Administrative Enquire with a view to making the Riverine tribes concerned and the S.Y.L. sign a bond for a suitable amount to keep the peace.<sup>97</sup>

Another aspect of Italian propaganda was engaging directly with local socio-political organisations. As mentioned, this engagement led to the creation and financial support of the pro-Italian umbrella association *Conferenza per la Somalia*. Italian funds were used to provide assistance to the political campaigns of the *Conferenza* and in particular, to supply associations with transport to move from one location to another.<sup>98</sup> In this way, the Italians could lavish promises and spread their propaganda. This strategy assumed particular importance in the 1950s and reflected the goal of the Italian government to construct forms of consent among parties regardless of their political affiliations. As it will be discussed in chapter four, once Italian rule was restored in 1950, the Italian administration continued to provide financial support to the pro-Italian front ‘as a due reward of their past attitudes’, and at the same time it engaged in dialogue with the political leadership of the League.<sup>99</sup> In fact, Italian policy was not interested in the actual aims and purposes of political

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<sup>97</sup> W. M. Donaldson, ‘Somalia Political Intelligent Report No. 4’, Mogadishu, 14<sup>th</sup> October 1947, ref. no. 3046/II/74; in TNA, WO, 230/207.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid..

<sup>99</sup> Consul Manzini, ‘Telegram to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome’, 6<sup>th</sup> October 1948, Mogadishu; ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 19, busta 11.

parties but in the consolidation of some forms of backing that would work to its own advantages. This aim appeared well-defined when drafting colonial policies in the late 1940s already:

The core question is to make the ‘green’ and ‘red’ parties converge towards one single goal: our interest.<sup>100</sup>

In the short term, the distribution of ‘lucrative donations’ contributed to create tension between Somali Youth League and the organisations within the *Conferenza*. Where, as illustrated in chapter two, the League was a self-funded organisation and collected money through private donations and membership fees, the *Conferenza* could rely on relative more conspicuous funds that were obtained with less effort. This circumstance created resentment among the League especially when, in 1947, it became readily apparent that the *Conferenza* managed to amass consent in specific areas:

In the Villabruzzi [i.e. at SAIS], Afgoi[i.e. Afgoooye], Merca[i.e. Marka] and Kismayu District, except perhaps actually in the towns themselves, the S.Y.L. are now in a distinct minority, and two other Native Political Societies, the P.B.U. and the Hisbia Dighil and Meriffle, have each increased considerably in the past three months... This has led to vigorous attempts by the S.Y.L. to discredit their rivals, and to brand them as the tools of foreign influence. Charges and counter-charges, petitions and counter-petitions, have been rife....<sup>101</sup>

By the end of 1947, Italian policy of ‘lucrative donations’ and the revival of pre-war ties with communities’ leaders achieved satisfactory results according to the Italian agents in Mogadishu.<sup>102</sup> Similar impressions were registered by the BMA:

The Somali Youth League in their counter-propaganda make full use of the undoubted fact that their rivals have “foreign”, i.e. Italian and Arab, backing. This cannot, however, obscure the truth, quite apart from the current political controversy concerning the future of the territory, there is a hard core of opposition throughout the Province to the claims and ideas of the S.Y.L. Among

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<sup>100</sup> Author unknown, ‘Telegram from the Italian Foreign Office to Mogadishu’, 11<sup>th</sup> September 1948 Rome; ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 19, busta 11.

<sup>101</sup> Chief Administrator, W. M. Donaldson, ‘Somalia Political Intelligence Report – No. 3’; TNA, WO, 230/207.

<sup>102</sup> Consul Manzini, ‘Telegram to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome’, 6<sup>th</sup> October 1948, Mogadishu; ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 19, busta 11.

the riverine tribes in the Villabruzzi [i.e. at SAIS] and Kismayu Districts, and among the Bimal in the Merca [i.e. Marka] District this opposition is represented by the P.B.U. The Bimal Jumiya, which started as a separate Club, is now fully merged with the P.B.U. In the Afgoi [i.e. Afgooye] District and among the Dighil tribes of the Merca District, the opposition is mainly represented by the Hizbia Dighil and Meriffle. Dighil and Meriffle are the two main branches of the Rahanwein confederation, the former living in the Benadir province where they are largely agriculturists. The H.D.M. Club indeed shows much interests in agriculture.<sup>103</sup>

Apart from increasing the tension between the League and *Conferenza*, the Italian strategy increased the resentment of the League towards the Italian community as they proved to be pivotal for the restoration of former colonial rule. On the occasion of the visit of the Four Powers Commission, the *Conferenza* worked together with a committee of representatives from the Italian community to organise a series of pro-Italian demonstrations in which crowds of demonstrators were brought to Mogadishu from across the regions displaying Italian flags.<sup>104</sup> As it emerges from the report of the time, the Commission was impressed by these pro-Italian demonstrations.<sup>105</sup> In the long term, conflicts between the League and the 'pro-Italia' became more intense, reaching a climax in the 1950s. The ways these conflicts affected the development of local politics and the establishment of self-government is the object of analysis of chapter five.

### 3.5 Conclusion

The chapter investigated the pro-Italian political front which backed restoration of Italian rule before the UN. It argued that the democratic approach of the UN in resolving the issue of former Italian colonies was in fact very limited as it expected local communities to make a choice between former colonial rule and the BMA. It was maintained that, in order to appreciate the reasons for local support for the

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<sup>103</sup> Chief Administrator, W. M. Donaldson, 'Somalia Political Intelligence Report – No. 3'; TNA, WO, 230/207.

<sup>104</sup> Del Boca, *Nostalgie delle colonie*, p. 174; See also, Bullotta *La Somalia sotto Due Bandiere*, p.183.

<sup>105</sup> For details see Four Power Commission, *Report*, Appendix I.

restoration of Italian rule, it is necessary to consider socioeconomic impacts of the war and military occupation.

It was illustrated how wartime contingencies and, more generally, the local and global politics of the 1940s caused a period of unrest and violent conflict over resources which were spurred even further by some of the responses adopted by the military administration. Although the BMA introduced positive changes and liberal policies by allowing freedom of association and breaking down colonial monopolies on trade and commerce, it did very little to improve local socioeconomic conditions. Moreover, the inability of the BMA to exercise effective control on conflicts over resources and to improve economic conditions caused resentment among agriculturalist communities.

This chapter argued that the procrastination of the UN and the extension of the British military administration deeply affected the development of local politics. In particular, the UN decision to send a special commission of investigation enforced political competition and contributed to increase division among different groups. It was also argued that due to the presence of the Italian community, this competition was marked by unfair features due to the fact that former colonialists relied on financial support from the Italian government. Moreover, the chapter approached the concept of consent to colonial rule by arguing that certain Italian groups made use of their privileged positions in order to catalyse support among sections of Somali communities which were affected by the war and the BMA, and by reviving pre-war ties with community leaders. From this perspective, Italian propaganda managed to construct consent by amassing the dissent to the BMA. In this sense, the return of Italian rule was presented as a restoration of security and economic stability. The overall result of the protraction of the UN debate, military occupation and the development of Italian propaganda was the radicalisation of conflicts among different groups which came to be a central theme of local politics in the 1950s and onwards.

## Chapter 4: '*Abbiamo Fregato gli Indigeni Somali*' The Italian Trusteeship and the verticalisation of the Somali political space

### 4.1 Introduction

In his book on the 'practice of everyday life', Michel de Certeau explores the means through which individuals appropriate mass culture, in the form of language, traditions and symbols, transform it and make it their own.<sup>1</sup> Over the past decades, Somali communities have appropriated and transformed colonial languages for multiple purposes. They have invented nicknames for each other and to mock the British and Italians alike.<sup>2</sup> In this sense, one of the most creative appropriations of colonial language is, perhaps, the adaptation of the acronym AFIS from *Amministrazione Fiduciaria Italiana della Somalia* (Italian Trusteeship of Somalia) to *Abbiamo Fregato gli Indigeni Somali*, literally translated as 'we ripped off the indigenous Somalis'.<sup>3</sup>

This joke does not only work extremely well in Italian but gets straight to the core of a multi-faceted problematic. The establishment of AFIS was, by all means, a reaffirmation of former colonial interests in Somalia. In spite of the UN rhetoric of freedom and self-determination and the Italian propaganda of the time, in 1950 these interests were still remarkable in the area. As the last chapter discussed, the presence of considerable economic investments and the strategies adopted by the Italian government to protect these positions contributed to the radicalisation and politicisation of conflicts among different communities. On a different level, the decolonisation plan imposed by the UN was a controversial solution, which on the one hand promoted the enhancement of democratisation and self-government, but on

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<sup>1</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, (Translated by Steven Rendall), (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1988).

<sup>2</sup> For instance, I have been told of a Mogadishu-based loan officer nicknamed '*Penna Facile*', literally 'Easy Pen', since it was 'easy' to persuade him to approve and sign loans. Fieldwork notes, Hargeysa, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> This information was kindly provided by Mohamed Trunji. Informal conversation, 1<sup>st</sup> July, London 2008.

the other imposed the means through which to achieve it. It was an ‘all inclusive package’ whereby agreement imposed its own terms and conditions upon the Somali quest for independence. It promised an illusory freedom guaranteeing independence on a fixed term but did not provide Somali communities with the freedom to decide, participate and negotiate how to get it. In fact, as independence had already been granted in 1949, AFIS became less susceptible to the pressures from Somali political organisations and supporters. In this sense, AFIS was, as the remake of the acronym captures, a rip-off.

This chapter focuses on the institutional framework of the post-colonial state imposed during the 10-year Trusteeship System of the United Nations whose administration was given to Italy and which became known as AFIS. As discussed in chapter two, one of the most noticeable features of the decolonisation process in the Horn of Africa was represented by the power vacuum that followed the military defeat of the Italians and the development of an international debate over former Italian colonies. These circumstances were paralleled by the emergence of a powerful movement from below. Due to the adoption by the British Administration (BMA) of liberal policy on civil rights, socio-economic activities proliferated and the Somali nationalists developed a political programme that catalysed masses’ support on a super-clan and super-regional base. By looking at the Trusteeship System and its state crafting, the chapter aims to provide the context in which to assess the legacy of post-colonial state. By analysing the institutional features of AFIS, the chapter argues that the decolonisation process oppressed the progressive wave of nationalism of the 1940s, enclosing it in a vertical, hierarchical, autocratic and centralised structure.

The chapter begins with a discussion of the concept of the Trusteeship System of the United Nations, whose administration was given to Italy. By establishing a series of representative organs and electoral procedures, the Trusteeship System set the institutional framework of the Somali Republic. The chapter argues that although the System was regarded as a progressive international attitude towards decolonisation, its institution was characterised by an ambiguity of scopes and purposes. Furthermore, the System was characterised by a series of

limitations that made it rather ineffective and tailored privileged position to the administrative powers. The chapter then looks at the implication and contradictions of the restoration of Italian rule in Somalia. It discusses the main aims of Italian policy that in restoring hegemony in the region relied on both consent and coercion. Finally, the chapter discusses the institutional framework established during the Trusteeship System specifically looking at the creation of representative councils and electoral procedures. It is argued that the institutional framework revived and reinforced traditional links to the detriment of political parties and sharpened the divide between political leadership and communities.

## 4.2 The Trusteeship System of the United Nations

A starting point for a discussion of the process of decolonisation in Somalia is tackling the concept of the Trusteeship System. The System was created by the United Nations at the post-war conference held in San Francisco in 1945. Its main purpose was to retain control over former enemies' colonies lost during the conflict, and there to promote progressive policies of institutional, economic, social, and political development in the forms of self-government and independence. At the time, the Trusteeship System was regarded as a progressive attitude of the international community towards decolonisation. It was further believed that the System would have enhanced the end of colonial rule worldwide.<sup>4</sup> In fact, the establishment of the System was paralleled with a new era within the drafting of colonial policies which began to consider a series of ambitious, though confusing, development plans for the colonies. However, as the scholarly debate on the decolonisation of British West Africa points out, in 1945 this did not reflect a clear plan toward the end of colonialism; among colonial policy-makers, very few, if any at all, considered plans for decolonisation in the short term.<sup>5</sup> In this sense, the

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<sup>4</sup> See for instance Ernst B. Haas, 'The Attempt to Terminate Colonialism: Acceptance of the United Nations Trusteeship System', *International Organisation*, 7:1 (1953).

<sup>5</sup> This is my own interpretation drawn from the debate. See Robert D. Pearce, *The Turning-Point in Africa: British Colonial Policy, 1938-1948* (London: Frank Cass, 1982); Robert D. Pearce 'The Colonial Office and Planned Decolonization in Africa', *African Affairs*, 83:330, (1984); John E. Flint, 'The Failure of Planned Decolonisation in British Africa', *African Affairs*, 82:328 (1983).



Trusteeship System was a progressive institution which paved the way towards the end of colonial dominion.

Closely resembling Article 1 of the UN Charter, the aims of the Trusteeship System were as follows:

- a. to further international peace and security;
- b. to promote the political, economic, social, and educational advancement of the inhabitants of the trust territories, and their progressive development towards self-government or independence as may be appropriate to the particular circumstances of each territory and its people and the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned, and as may be provided by the terms of each trusteeship agreement;
- c. to encourage respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion, and to encourage recognition of the interdependence of the peoples of the world; and
- d. to ensure equal treatment in social, economic, and commercial matters for all Members of the United Nations and their nationals, and also equal treatment for the latter in the administration of justice, without prejudice to the attainment of the foregoing objectives and subject to the provisions of Article 80.

Despite the clarity of the aims of the Trusteeship System, the nature and forms of institutional development that were to be adopted remained undefined. At the end of the Second World War, the UN was pressed by a series of problems with respect to former enemies' colonies that were influenced by the emerging features of the Cold War and by the interests of colonial powers, Britain and France. Already in 1942, a subcommittee formed by members of the Allied Coalition pushed for the promotion of self-government in former enemies' colonies but cautiously did not make any implications regarding the notion of independence that would have affected the British and French colonial empires.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, the UN Charter remained ambiguous on the question of independence especially in relation to former enemies' colonies. In fact, the stress on 'self-government' did not specify what forms of self-government had to be pursued.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The Subcommittee was influenced by the fact that French and British stances opposed any system which would have affected their own empires. James N. Murray, *The United Nations Trusteeship System*, (Urbana: Illinois U. P., 1957), p. 25.

<sup>7</sup> The Charter recognised the independence of those countries which were independent before the war and eventually invaded during the conflict; it promised to 'preserve' the wishes of those 'people who

Affected by different and often conflicting international powers' interests, the UN debate on former enemies' colonies centred on *who* would control the regions rather than *how*. This meant, the discussion of the actual structure of the Trusteeship System became of secondary importance. As argued by Kelly and Rossi, the UN negotiations on former Italian colonies were negatively affected by the competing interests of the Cold War and by the impossibility of the Four Powers, France, Great Britain, USA and Soviet Union, to agree with each other on the trust administration. The final decision to give the trusteeship of Somalia to Italy was the result of long-lasting diplomatic discussions, shifting alliances, and disagreement especially between France and Great Britain on the one side, and Soviet Union on the other. In the end, once British and French colonial interests in the area became less predominant and the position of Soviet Union marginalised, an Italian trusteeship in Somalia appeared the most convenient and less problematic option to the great powers.<sup>8</sup>

Procrastination during these negotiations penalised the actual discussions on forms and conditions of trusteeship that remained undefined. For instance, the fact that the final scope of the System remained ambiguously embedded between the notions of self-government and independence permitted the adoption of different dispositions for similar cases: independence via trusteeship was recommended for Libya and Somalia; while federation to Ethiopia was recommended for Eritrea. In fact the actual institution of the Trusteeship System did not result from the post-war international debate but was modelled on the Mandate System of the League of Nations created at the end of the First World War to control former German and Turkish colonies, with which it shared the core essence of its structure.<sup>9</sup>

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aspire to *independence*' with no further clarifications. William Roger Louis, R. Robinson, 'The U.S. and the End of British Empire in Tropical Africa', in Gifford, Roger Louis (eds.), *The Transfer of Power in Africa*, p. 34.

<sup>8</sup> Kelly, *Cold War in the Desert*; Rossi, *L'Africa Italiana*.

<sup>9</sup> Although the concept of trusteeship was not a new one, as it was first used at the dawn of the British Empire, it has to be related to the concept of International Mandates instituted by the League of the Nations after the First World War. See K. Robinson, *The Dilemmas of Trusteeship. Aspects of the British Colonial Policy between the Wars*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), chapter 1. See also Michael D. Callahan, *A Sacred Trust: the League of Nations and Africa, 1929-1946*, (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2004).

The Trusteeship System created at San Francisco was provided with new features that would have improved the quality of administration but, as this section argues, the effective power of the system remained limited. With respect to the Mandate System, the Trusteeship System had more control and supervision over the administration; it also had, at least theoretically, direct contact with the administrated subjects. However, its structure was characterised by a series of limitations that made the system powerful on a nominal level but rather ineffective on a practical level.

The Trusteeship System was based on a mix of two criteria: accountability for the administration of trust areas, and international supervision of their administrations.<sup>10</sup> It had a well-defined structure that entailed three different actors: the international community, represented by the UN; the administrative powers; and the administrated subjects. The Trusteeship System was the decision-making organ with deliberative power; it functioned through an appointed body, the Trusteeship Council (TC), which acted as supervisor over the administrations.<sup>11</sup> The Trusteeship System had the ultimate control and responsibility for the administrations but it did not make any specific claims of sovereignty over the trustee regions. In fact the issue of sovereignty remained unresolved since it did not rest with the administrative powers nor with their subjects.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, in order to make the supervision of the regions more effective, annual reports written by the administrative powers had to be submitted to the TC; petitions could be accepted and examined by the TC; and periodic visits of the TC to trust regions were considered.<sup>13</sup>

Nonetheless, on an empirical level, the Trusteeship System had several limitations. Its framework tailored a powerful and privileged position for the administrative powers, which were left free to act. Where the Trusteeship Council held the role of decision-making, all the practical issues related to the everyday

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<sup>10</sup> Murray, *The United Nation*, p.8.

<sup>11</sup> Charmian Edwards Toussaint, *The Trusteeship System of the United Nations*, (London: Praeger, 1956), pp. 151-8.

<sup>12</sup> Francis B. Sayre, 'Legal Problems Arising from the United Nations Trusteeship System', *The American Journal of International Law*, 263(1948), pp. 270-2.

<sup>13</sup> Toussaint, *The Trusteeship System*, pp. 179-99.

administration were left with the administrative powers.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, the Trusteeship Council played the role of supervisor but its contacts with the administrated subjects were rather limited. The TC's periodic visits were organised on fixed terms, and no measures were taken to ensure that communities' petitions would not be censored by the administrative powers.<sup>15</sup> The contacts between the Council and the administrative powers were scheduled on fixed and frequent terms and articulated via reports written by the administrative powers that unilaterally provided information on the progress of the administration.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, the administrative powers enjoyed a privileged position within the system: they had effective control of the regions but not the overall responsibility for their administration, which rested with the Council. Moreover, the Trusteeship System made the administrative power accountable for the administration but were not compelled by the decisions of the Council.

From this framework the limitations of the system are clear. In spite of the new features introduced at San Francisco to improve the quality of administration and the degree of international supervision, the Trusteeship System suffered from serious shortcomings. Most notably, on the one hand, the administrative powers had no ultimate responsibility for their administration; on the other, in the case of irregularities in the administration, the Council had no effective power to rectify, invalidate, or terminate the trusteeship agreement. In fact, the Council had no power to oust the administrative powers 'even should be there a fragrant case of maladministration.'<sup>17</sup>

#### **4.2.1 Ineffectiveness of the Trusteeship System: the unresolved border issue between Ethiopia and Somalia**

The restricted power of the Council limited the effectiveness of Trusteeship System especially in cases where the UN recommendations were not respected by the

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<sup>14</sup> Victor Pungong, 'The United States and the International Trusteeship System', in David Ryan, Victor Pungong (eds.), *The United States and Decolonization: Power and Freedom*, (New York: Palgrave, 2000), p. 85.

<sup>15</sup> Toussaint, *The Trusteeship System*, pp. 179-99

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Sayre, 'Legal Problems Arising from the United Nations Trusteeship System', pp. 277-8.

administrative power. The following example deals with the controversial case of the boundary dispute between Ethiopia and Somalia that eventually constituted the background to two wars between Ethiopia and Somalia in 1964 and 1977-78 respectively. One of the conditions of the Trusteeship Agreement with Italy for the territory of former *Somalia Italiana*, prescribed the solution by international agreement of the un-delimited boundaries of the trust territory.<sup>18</sup> Despite several UN recommendations being adopted on the issue, the negotiations between Ethiopian and Italian governments were never accomplished and the settlement of the border issue was subject to a controversial procedure. Lacking compelling power, the UN recommendations and the Trusteeship System proved inadequate and did not contribute to the positive fulfilment of the question.

The colonial partition of the Horn of Africa was characterised by a great deal of confusion around the colonial borders, especially between *Somalia Italiana*, British Somaliland and Ethiopia;<sup>19</sup> this confusion was used as a pretext by the Italians for attacking and occupying Ethiopia.<sup>20</sup> In January 1950, the Trusteeship Council urged Ethiopian, British and Italian governments to negotiate a settlement to the border dispute before the beginning of AFIS in April 1950. As this recommendation was not respected by the afore-mentioned powers, the BMA, in the hand-over of power to Italy, ‘unilaterally establish[ed] a provisional boundary’ between Ethiopia and *Somalia Italiana*.<sup>21</sup> Although the provisional boundary was not meant to be critical for the setting of the boundary dispute,<sup>22</sup> it eventually became the official border of the Somali Republic. Nonetheless, before the establishment of AFIS, the provisional border was considered controversial by the then Italian minister of Foreign Affairs who raised the issue to the Trusteeship Council as follows:

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<sup>18</sup> See article 1 of the trusteeship agreement in *Libro Verde*, p. 141.

<sup>19</sup> See for instance John J. Drysdale *The Somali Dispute*, (London: Pall Mall Press, 1964). For an Ethiopian view on the matter: Mesfin Wolde Mariam, ‘The Background of Ethio-Somali Boundary Dispute’, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 2 (1964).

<sup>20</sup> Prassitele Piccinini, *Breve Storia del Conflitto Italo-Etiopico Attraverso i Documenti*, (Milan: Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale, 1936), pp. 57-65.

<sup>21</sup> Letter sent by the British representative at UN permanent Council to the Trusteeship Council in March 1950 with regard to the provisional boundary. Quoted in ‘Il problema dei confini tra Somalia ed Etiopia’, *Relazioni Internazionali*, Milan, (XIV), 15, p. 220.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid..

The Italian Government wants to emphasize the fact that the provisional boundary was established without its consent; furthermore... it wants to raise objections on the juridical aspects as well as on the practical inconveniences that could emerge from a such-conceived boundary. For instance, along the Webi Shebelle River [i.e. Webi Shabeelle], the provisional frontier turned 30 kilometres inwards if compared to the previous frontier... A similar circumstance happened in between the regions of Webi Shebelle and British Somaliland... there is the urgent need to regulate the question of pastures and wells to which the vital interests of the populations of that region are dependant.<sup>23</sup>

The ways in which the Trusteeship Council attempted to resolve this border issues is indicative of the limited nature of international power and limited obligations of trust power towards the Council. As AFIS did not respect the given recommendations, the Council proved to be unable to guarantee their enforcement. Considering the settlement of the boundary dispute of great importance, the Trusteeship Council gave the following recommendation to Ethiopia, Great Britain and Italy regarding the boundary issue:

The portion of its [of *Somalia Italiana*] boundaries with British Somaliland, as well as with Ethiopia, not already delimited by international agreement [should] be delimited by bilateral negotiations between United Kingdom Government and the Administering Authority, in respect of the boundaries with British Somaliland, and between the Ethiopian Government and the Administer Authority in respect of the boundaries with Ethiopia<sup>24</sup>

However, the international negotiations were only partially carried out by the administrative power, and an agreement regarding the Ethiopian-Somali border was never accomplished.<sup>25</sup>

Urging Ethiopian and Italian governments to proceed with the negotiations, the Trusteeship Council and the UN resorted to the 'force of persuasion' via a series of resolutions that were adopted by the UN General Assembly throughout the

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<sup>23</sup> Communication of the Minister of Foreign Affairs Sforza to the Trusteeship Council, 15<sup>th</sup> March 1950, 'Il problema dei confini tra Somalia ed Etiopia', *Relazioni Internazionali*, Milan, (XIV), 15, p. 220.

<sup>24</sup> UN Resolution 392 (V) December 15, in Foreign Relations of the United States, 'Somalia: United States Interest in a Peaceful Resolution of the Border Dispute between Somalia and Ethiopia', XVIII(1955-1957), p. 609.

<sup>25</sup> The negotiations between Ethiopian and Italian governments were meant to begin in 1951 but the procedures started in 1955 only. Due to disagreements on the limitations of the southern border, the negotiations stopped immediately. Pier Giacomo Magri, *La Politica Estera Etiopica e le Questioni Eritrea e Somalia 1941-1960*, (Milan: Giuffrè 1980), p. 94.

1950s.<sup>26</sup> However, the ‘persuasive’ force of these resolutions did not prevent the negotiations from stopping completely in 1957.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, the UN decided to set the dispute through the procedure of arbitration that prescribed the nomination by the Ethiopian and Italian governments of three *super-partes* judges’ as solution-seekers to the dispute.<sup>28</sup> Once again, the UN recommendations were not respected and no agreement was reached among the Ethiopian and Italian governments and, as a result, the King of Norway was nominated by the UN as a solution-seeker to the issue.<sup>29</sup>

The UN resolutions proved to be ineffective because they lacked compelling power. As this example testifies, in spite of reiterative UN warnings, the negotiations never developed and the delimitations of the Ethiopian-Somali boundary were settled through the procedure of arbitration, just a few months before Somalia became independent. The process of arbitration confirmed the provisional border set by BMA as official border of the Somali Republic. One of the immediate effects of this international failure was an increase sense of insecurity with regards to border issues that fostered the process of unification of Somalia and Somaliland in 1960 that is subject of analysis of chapter six.

### 4.3 ‘Carrot and stick’: restoring Italian rule

On November 21, 1949, the UN General Assembly resolution 289 (IV) recommended that former *Somalia Italiana* should become independent after a 10-

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<sup>26</sup> UN Resolution 854 (IX) December 14, 1954; UN Resolution 947 (X), December 15, 1955; UN Resolution 1068 (VI) February 26, 1957, in Foreign Relations of the United States, ‘Somalia’, pp. 608-23.

<sup>27</sup> According to Italian diplomats in Addis Ababa, the Ethiopia government aimed at maintaining the border adjustments delimited by the BMA. So the Ethiopian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Yilma Deressa, to the Italian Ambassador in Ethiopia, ‘making any concessions to the Somalis would be pointless because that would foster more aspirations [Somali irredentist claims]’. (Author unknown), Italian Embassy ‘Telegram to AFIS’, 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1959, Addis Ababa. ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 9, busta 2.

<sup>28</sup> So the Trusteeship Agreement: ‘In order to resolve any and all differences arising in the course of such negotiations, the respective parties to each bilateral negotiation agree, on the request of either party, to a procedure of mediation by a United Nations Mediator to be appointed by the Secretary-parties to accept recommendations of the Mediator, to a procedure of arbitration; *Recommends, further*, that, with respect to any other boundaries not delimited by international agreement, the parties concerned seek to reach agreement by negotiation or by arbitration.’ *Libro Verde*, p. 45.

<sup>29</sup> UN Resolution 1213 (XII) 14<sup>th</sup> December 1957. Quoted in Catherine Hoskyns (ed.), *The Ethiopia Somali-Kenya dispute*, (Dar es Salaam: Oxford University Press, 1969), Appendix.

year trusteeship under the Italian Administration. The Italian Administration, AFIS, became effective on April 1950 when full executive and legislative power was transferred from the BMA to Italy. Within a period of 10 years until December 1960, which was brought forward to July 1960, AFIS was required to promote political, social and economic development, to urge self-government and prepare the country for independence. It was a rather ambitious programme that required the establishment, of a series of institutional infrastructures in a limited period of time, such as in the field of education and of representative councils, which were mostly neglected during the colonial period.

The UN Resolution was final and did not leave room for objections: in seeking a solution to the issue of former colonies, the UN acted as a third, allegedly ‘neutral’, party that mediated between the former colonial subjects – i.e. the Somali communities – and Italian (colonial) interests. During the debate, nationalists relied upon the UN, testified before the UN Special Commission of Investigation and thus implicitly accepted and recognised the role of the UN as legitimate solution-seeker to the question. Consequently, nationalists were bound to accept and to recognise as legitimate the UN decisions regardless of the conditions that were offered. The remake of AFIS by Somali popular culture, from which this chapter draws its title, accused the international promises of freedom and self-determination of ripping-off local communities. This section discusses the theoretical and practical contradictions of the restoration of Italian administration in the region and how Italian policy of creating consent was drafted accordingly.

The establishment of an Italian administration in *Somalia Italiana* was inherently embedded in a series of contradictions that reflected the tension that characterised the institution of the Trusteeship System. On a practical level, AFIS represented a revival of Italian rule under different terms but it also implied discontinuity with the British administration. For this reason, AFIS as a representative of the UN, was progressive and reactionary at the same time: on the one hand, the Italian government claimed to promote freedom and democracy and to



embody ‘the paladin of African nations.’<sup>30</sup> However, on the other, it re-imposed former colonial administrators, deliberately oblivious of the social-political changes taking place across the regions.<sup>31</sup> On a different level, the restoration of Italian rule in Somalia under an international mandate generated a series of questions that challenged the very same principles of the UN. For instance, on what basis was a non-UN member state, as the Italian Government, qualified to represent the UN in Somalia?<sup>32</sup> On what basis was a democracy recently emerging from two decades of fascism, like Italy, entitled to represent the UN’s liberal principles formulated in opposition to fascism in 1945? Finally, to what extent were the UN principles opposed to fascism if the same principles allowed the restoration of former Italian rule in Somalia? Overcoming these inherent contradictions became the principal objective of the Italian government with respect to the trusteeship administration in Somalia. Accordingly, it drafted a policy whose main purposes were seeking international prestige and consensus within international Western community, membership of the UN, and the occasion to prove that collusions with the fascist past were over.<sup>33</sup>

On a more empirical nature, issues of consent for colonial rule – the Gramscian notion of the masses’ acquiescent attitude to the ‘direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group’ which enjoys a hegemonic position in the system of production<sup>34</sup> – needed to be addressed. Apart from retaining key positions in the agricultural industry, Italy did not hold a position of hegemony in the region, nor did it have the backing of the majority of Somali communities. With the

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<sup>30</sup> This rhetoric became a commonplace feature of Italian politics. See, for instance, the memoir of the then Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs: Count Sforza, *Cinque Anni a Palazzo Chigi*, p. 171. See also the inaugural speech of the Italian Administrator in Mogadishu *Il Corriere della Somalia*, 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 1950.

<sup>31</sup> The choice of the administrators for AFIS became very controversial. In particular, the nomination of Guglielmo Nasi as AFIS Governor generated a series of critiques from the UN, the Ethiopian government and Italian leftist parties. Guglielmo Nasi was a former high-rank fascist general who took part in the attack of Ethiopia and served as Italian administrator during the occupation. Following the critiques, his nomination had to be withdrawn. See Del Boca, *Nostalgia delle Colonie*, pp. 57-61.

<sup>32</sup> Italy became member of the UN in 1955. The possibility to have a non-UN member state as administrative authority was not considered at the San Francisco Conference in 1945. Special arrangements were eventually made in that sense. Toussaint, *The Trusteeship System*, p. 206.

<sup>33</sup> See Morone, *L’ultima Colonia*, pp. 45-9.

<sup>34</sup> Gramsci, *Quaderni del Carcere*.

aim to controlling the state apparatus in its political, institutional, juridical forms and promoting forms of consent among the subjects, Italian policy evolved through a mix of consent and coercion. As discussed in chapter three starting from the late 1940s, strategies to amass consent were drafted by the Italian government by attempting to muster the forms of discontent among Somali communities towards the BMA. By 1950, these policies became more elaborated: on the one hand, the ties set up during the Italian colonial rule with sections of Somali society, mostly communities' leaders, were revived while attempts were made to link up with the political leadership; on the other hand, political activities were repressed.

A first matter of concern for AFIS was dealing with a certain hostility from local communities. As the UN Commission reported, sections of Somali communities, which mainly found expression in the Somali Youth League, bitterly opposed the restoration of Italian rule. However, the official position of the international community and of the Italian government expressed enthusiasm for the successful accomplishment of the trusteeship administration. The Italian government confidently claimed to rely on both the 'collaboration of the administrated people',<sup>35</sup> and of the Somali Youth League.<sup>36</sup> International press echoed a similar optimistic attitude: the *New York Times* for instance, clearly excluded the possibility of any confrontation between AFIS and Somali nationalists.<sup>37</sup> Despite the degree of enthusiasm, the diplomatic exchanges between the BMA and AFIS clearly testified great concerns with regards to the Somali Youth League and its hostile attitude towards AFIS. Rumours of 'secret plans' to oppose the restoration of Italian rule were commonplace within diplomatic circles;<sup>38</sup> 'extreme caution' was recommended

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<sup>35</sup> 'L'Italia in Somalia', *Relazioni Internazionali*, 15(XIV), p. 214.

<sup>36</sup> So the then Italian Prime Minister De Gasperi on the issue: 'With regard to the political situation, the Somali Youth League constituted a serious issue which has also been discussed. Certainly, it is necessary to take this movement into account: however, the latest pronouncements are soothing... the Somali Youth League declared that if the Italian Government will keep the promises of enhancing self-government, of guiding them towards independence as prescribed by the statute, they [the Somali Youth League] will support it [the Italian Government]' 'L'On. De Gasperi sul Ritorno dell'Italia in Somalia', *Relazioni Internazionali*, 6(XIV), p. 78.

<sup>37</sup> *The New York Times*, 7<sup>th</sup> February 1950, quoted in 'Il mandato italiano sulla Somalia nei commenti internazionali', *Relazioni Internazionali*, 7(XIV), p. 97.

<sup>38</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 16<sup>th</sup> February 1950; a copy of the article is stored in an unnamed folder in ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 2, busta 34.

by the BMA in the occasion of the hand-over of power,<sup>39</sup> due to the presence of 'fanatic' groups within the Somali Youth League that could constitute a threat to AFIS rule.<sup>40</sup>

To counter this opposition and in order to establish its rule, AFIS adopted a rather coercive policy. By 1950, the political activities of all parties, the ones opposed to or not opposed to AFIS began to be repressed.<sup>41</sup> Restrictive measures to regulate political activities were implemented by AFIS between 1950 and 1953. For instance, political parties were allowed to hold meetings once per week only on pre-arranged days.<sup>42</sup> Simultaneously, a wave of arrests targeted political supporters to the point that the number of prisoners held in Mogadishu increased threefold within the first two months of AFIS.<sup>43</sup> Political repression was met by disapproval and systematic resistance. Hundreds of petitions were sent to the UN by all political organisations, in particular by the Somali Youth League. The general claim was that a 'cold war' between AFIS and political parties had been established in Somalia; the petitions denounced AFIS as 'by all means against the League'.<sup>44</sup> However, the petitions, which were supposed to play an essential role within the exchange of communication between communities under trusteeship and the UN, were ignored.

Riots and protests against AFIS, mostly organised by the League, became frequent and widespread in the trust region.<sup>45</sup> The confrontation between the League

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<sup>39</sup> Pankhurst, *Ex-Italian Somaliland*, pp. 430-1.

<sup>40</sup> Benardelli, Telegram to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 19<sup>th</sup> August 1949, Mogadishu, n. 1143, ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 19, busta 11.

<sup>41</sup> So the Italian General Secretary, Benardelli in a telegram to the Italian commissioner in Kismaayo: 'It is not possible to stop the proliferation of political parties, however it is necessary to stop [their activities] also the ones of the Dighil & Merifle. In the centre [i.e. Mogadishu] I've already induced the President of H.D.M. to give up for the moment'. General Secretary, Benardelli, Telegram to Commissario[ Commissioner] in Kismaayo, 13<sup>th</sup> September 1950, Mogadishu; ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 9, busta 2.

<sup>42</sup> AFIS (Author unknown), Internal Telegram, 25<sup>th</sup> February 1953, Mogadishu. ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 9, busta 2.

<sup>43</sup> Endre Sik, *Storia dell'Africa nera il XX secolo. Disintegrazione degli Sistema Coloniale in Africa Nera*, (Milan: La Pietra, 1978), p. 374.

<sup>44</sup> The Somali Youth League, Afmadow branch, 'Petition to the UN', 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1950, Afmadow. A limited collections of the petitions sent to the UN by Somali political parties is stored in an unnamed folder in ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 9, busta 2.

<sup>45</sup> For instance, within 2 months, from August 1950 until October 1950, six telegrams were sent from local district administrations to AFIS in Mogadishu to report violent protests; as a response, members and supporters of the League were arrested. To be more precise, on 5<sup>th</sup> October 1950, three Somalis were killed and many arrested in Gaalkacyo during riots between local communities and police.

and AFIS reached its climax when in 1952, as a response to protests, Italian police raided the League headquarters in Mogadishu, forced it to temporarily close down and made arrests among its members.<sup>46</sup> Thereafter, the attitude of the leadership of the League gradually changed and by mid-1950s became one of cooperation with AFIS. Arguably, this shifting attitude was caused by the repressive policies adopted by the administrative power. However this also needs to be understood within the Italian aim to create consent and to allure Somali political leadership.

A more politically-nuanced aspect of the Italian policy was the creation of consent among traditional and political leadership. As argued in chapter three, Italian policy by the late 1940s aimed at the construction of a pro-Italian Somali front that would testify before the UN in favour of Italy. Accordingly, so called 'lucrative donations' were distributed among community's leaders and members of the *Conferenza per la Somalia* with the aim of buying off their favour and support; this policy was pivotal for the restoration of Italian rule.<sup>47</sup> In 1950, AFIS decided to continue financially supporting the pro-Italian front 'as a due reward of their past attitudes'.<sup>48</sup> Additionally, this policy aimed at the revival of pre-war ties between the Italians and the waged-leaders that constituted the base of Italian system of dominion analysed by Hess.<sup>49</sup> In this sense, one of the first measures adopted by AFIS was the full reinstitution of the colonial system of waged-leaders in place before the war and the increase of their monthly salaries.<sup>50</sup>

At the same time, Italian administrators attempted to engage in dialogue with the political leadership of the Somali Youth League, to moderate its 'radical' trend, and establish links with AFIS:

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Regional Commissioner (name unknown), Telegram to AFIS in Mogadishu, 5<sup>th</sup> October 1950, Gaalkacyo; ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 9, busta 2. In 1951 more riots were reported during a demonstration in favour of the return to Mogadishu after a propaganda trip to Nairobi of one of the League's leaders Abdullahi Issa Mahamud, eventually Prime Minister in 1956. Further riots were reported in Bardheere on 18<sup>th</sup> February 1952.

<sup>46</sup> The League was allowed to reopen five days later.

<sup>47</sup> For details see Four Power Commission, *Report*, Appendix I.

<sup>48</sup> Consul Manzini, 'Telegram to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome', 6<sup>th</sup> October 1948, Mogadishu; ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 19, busta 11.

<sup>49</sup> Hess, *Italian Colonialism*, chapter 5.

<sup>50</sup> The colonial institution of waged-leaders was fully restored and the salaries increased 3-fold. Castagno, 'Somali Republic', in Coleman, Rosberg (eds.), *Political Parties*, p. 525.

We certainly support the idea to allure the S.Y.L., in order to make it our instrument so that it [the League] could back us and ... eventually testify before the UN and international public opinion in our favour.<sup>51</sup>

This policy 'discretely and totally indirectly' favoured and increased the number of pro-Italian 'agents' within the affiliates of the League,<sup>52</sup> and had already given 'good results' in 1949.<sup>53</sup> The choice to engage directly with the League reflected the wide-held belief within AFIS that the party was the most important association of the region. Proof of the League's credibility was given by the fact that previous attempts to bribe its leadership were unsuccessful:

[N]otwithstanding its faults, [the League] is the sole political organization worthy of this name in today Somalia. Evidence of that is the fact that it is mainly funded by the membership subscription fees and the leadership, and the fact that the ones more politically mature, can be convinced more easily politically than with lucrative donations.<sup>54</sup>

As discussed in chapter three, the main aim of these policies was to promote Italian interests exclusively; local political needs, aspirations and agendas were discarded. In many ways, the attitude adopted by the Italian government resembled the mind-set which characterised the institution of the Trusteeship System. As the previous section highlighted, the System was designed to achieve self-government and independence without discussing the ways through which these goals would be fulfilled. In a similar way, AFIS was eager to construct some forms of backing locally regardless of their political affiliations. In this sense, while in the 1940s Italian strategies were able to catalyse forms of dissents towards the BMA, plans were already drafted to engage in dialogue with the Somali Youth League due to its increasing importance in the area. For this reason and despite the repressive policies,

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<sup>51</sup> The Italian Foreign Ministry (author unknown), Telegram to Mogadishu, 11<sup>th</sup> September 1948, Rome; ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 19, busta 11.

<sup>52</sup> As reported by the Italian agent, Benardelli, in Mogadishu to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: 'On the whole, our agents within the S.Y.L. have produced good results.' Benardelli, Telegram to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 19<sup>th</sup> August 1949, Mogadishu, n. 1143; ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 19, busta 11.

<sup>53</sup> Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Author unknown), *Riservato*, 30<sup>th</sup> July 1948, Rome, n. 1029. ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 19, busta 11.

<sup>54</sup> Consul Manzini, 'Telegram to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome', 6<sup>th</sup> October 1948, Mogadishu; ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 19, busta 11.

AFIS did not aim to hindering the proliferation of nationalism and of the Somali Youth League; it rather aimed at using Somali nationalism to its own advantages. So, colonial plans were drafted as early as 1948:

Nationalism, with all its pros and cons, is the prominent political factor in today Somalia. Our administration-to-be cannot neglect or, worst, repress this. In fact, it was such nationalism that for instance prevented the collusion between the League and Ethiopia to our detriment... It is evident that once Somali nationalism will be accommodated and allied to our cause it will constitute clear opportunities for the development of our activities in these regions.<sup>55</sup>

#### 4.3.1 Constructing consent: the role of education and scholarships

A key role within Italian strategies of constructing consent among political leadership was played by education and the institutions of scholarship and training programmes. As this section highlights, these strategies represented a turning point in shaping the relations between political leadership and AFIS. Given the poor status of education, a field that had been almost entirely neglected by previous Italian colonial administration,<sup>56</sup> the decolonisation plan considered development policies in education to be of great importance. Although some education programmes were set up by the BMA, the achievements remained modest.<sup>57</sup> Therefore, in accordance with the development programme imposed by the trusteeship, AFIS agreed to enhance education facilities and programmes that would provide Somali communities with at least some basic primary education.<sup>58</sup> While the results of this programme remained limited in the short term, they set long-lasting links between Italy and Somalia that were consolidated by the foundation of National University in Mogadishu, sponsored by Italian government and provided with Italian academics.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Consul Manzini, 'Telegram to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome', 6<sup>th</sup> October 1948, Mogadishu; ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 19, busta 11.

<sup>56</sup> On Italian policies in the field of education: Hess, *Italian Colonialism*, pp. 187-8.

<sup>57</sup> See Lewis, *A Modern History*, pp. 116-20.

<sup>58</sup> In 1952 AFIS drafted a Five-Year Education Plan which was later extended. The plan scheduled primary education to 22,080 pupils in the elementary schools and 19,600 adult-education classes. Castagno, 'Somali Republic', in Kitchen (ed.), *The Educated African*, pp. 88-91.

<sup>59</sup> Tripodi, *The Colonial Legacy*, pp. 59-60.

In her contribution to the critical discussion on colonial hegemony in Africa and India, Dagmar Engels analysed how scholarships and university education represented the means through which colonial rule attempted to establish hegemony, based on the current notion that ‘knowledge is power’. These efforts were marked by a dialectical tension between colonial rule and colonial subjects in which the latter made use of education to assimilate forms and structures of the colonial domain and use these structures to access power.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, the implementation of scholarship programmes that would provide training and high-level qualification for the potential institutional and administrative leadership assumed a critical significance in shaping the relations between AFIS and political leadership.

These programmes meant to address political leaders and transform them into a governing intelligentsia.<sup>61</sup> This constituted a completely new trend because, as argued in chapter two, the Somali Youth League emerged as a collective effort and was not led by western-educated elites or a well-defined urban class. From this perspective, the process of formation of a political intelligentsia was shaped through the programme of scholarships set up by AFIS. In particular, this process gained momentum following the establishment of a training school in Politics and Administration in Mogadishu. Throughout the 1950s, it became readily apparent that Somali political leaders had to access the scholarship programmes in order to appropriate the institutional domain of AFIS and, subsequently, to enter the state. Due to the hegemonic power of AFIS in this domain – i.e. AFIS held the power to appoint scholarship-holders – political leaders had to conform to the expectations and requirements of AFIS.

Within the broader plan of democratisation and ‘Somalisation’, the position of power held by AFIS should not be underestimated. Through this programme, AFIS maintained the facility to appoint scholarship-holders whose qualifications would be instrumental for accessing institutional posts. At the time, there was a great demand of skilled personnel due to the paucity of qualified Somalis; the highly

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<sup>60</sup> Dagmar Engels, ‘Modes of Knowledge, Modes of Power: Universities in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century India’, in Engels, Marks (eds.), *Contesting Colonial Hegemony*, pp. 87-93.

<sup>61</sup> Libro Verde, p. 95.

bureaucratised state being crafted by the Italians opened up numerous job opportunities which increased following the progressive replacement of Italians by Somalis. Within this process, AFIS held a position of predominance that could be hardly challenged. Consequently, the political leaders were forced to accept AFIS conditions in order to get access to the state and, ultimately, structures of power.

The extent to which appointing scholarships to political leaders modified their political stance is difficult to estimate. It is a fact that many members of the League made use of these scholarships and pursued education in Italy.<sup>62</sup> As Tripodi suggests, there are interconnected links between the programme of scholarships and the shifting attitude of the League's leadership that by mid-1905s became closer to AFIS.<sup>63</sup> At least at an official level, the attitude of political leadership changed radically. So did, for example, the attitude of Abdullahi Issa, secretary-general of the League in 1949 and Prime Minister of the Legislative Assembly in 1956. In the 1940s, he was among the strong opponents to the restoration of Italian rule. For instance, during a trip to the United States in 1949 in provision of the UN final decisions on former Italian Somalia, Abdullahi Issa regularly broadcasted speeches from New York to the Horn of Africa which were firmly against the restoration of Italian rule:

It would be better to fight two or three hundred years than to be under Italian dominion. It would be better for all Somalis to be killed than to have the Italians in Somalia. The Somalis would act as the natives acted in the Union of South Africa.<sup>64</sup>

Within a few years, Abdullahi Issa's personal stance toward AFIS changed radically. In 1955, on the occasion of the twelfth anniversary of the League, the Somali leader expressed gratitude to Italian rule for the progress in the administration and confirmed total collaboration with AFIS.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Tripodi, *The Colonial Legacy*, p. 60.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid..

<sup>64</sup> Abdullahi Issa's broadcasts were closely followed and reported by the BMA. In May 1949, this became a matter of great concern as he broadcasted four times a week from New York where he was member of a delegation of the League before the UN. Mr. Law, Telegram to the FO no. depth 110, Mogadishu, 14<sup>th</sup> May 1949, in 'Political Situation in Somalia', TNA, FO 371/73795.

<sup>65</sup> See his speech in *Il Corriere della Somalia*, 16<sup>th</sup> May 1955.



Somali political leadership should not take the whole responsibility for this shift. As pointed out by Chatterjee, in order to bring colonial rule to a formal end, nationalists would be ready to challenge colonialists within their own domain only after having assimilated the features of their structures and domain.<sup>66</sup> This condition was made very clear by AFIS which would appoint Somalis at institutional posts on the condition that they attended and fulfilled the qualifications that were established by AFIS.

#### 4.4 Crafting the post-colonial state

The trusteeship administration can be divided in two administrative phases. The first phase (1950-56) was characterised by Italian effective and legislative power and came to an end with the election of the first Legislative Assembly in 1956. The second phase (1956-60) corresponded with the period of self-government where ultimate control of the trust region rested with the administrative power, yet the legislative, administrative and constitutional power rested with Somali-led governments. This section deals with the first phase of AFIS (1950-6) which was considered crucial for the crafting of the post-colonial state and specifically, it focuses on the establishment of representative councils and of electoral procedures.

A partial consensus among scholars indicates that state structures inherited by colonial rule in Somalia constituted an alien, Western-like, highly centralised ruling system which was oblivious of local culture and space, and alienated the highly decentralised pastoral society.<sup>67</sup> Studies with a closer focus on AFIS by Tripodi and Morone maintained similar positions. For instance, in studying the economic and political relations between the Italian government and Somalia, Paolo Tripodi contended that the work of AFIS produced rather weak achievements especially in the political field. This was attributable to the fact that the political model imposed

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<sup>66</sup> Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*, pp. 9-13.

<sup>67</sup> Ismail I. Ahmed, 'The Heritage of War and State Collapse in Somalia and Somaliland: Local Effects, External Interventions and Reconstruction', *Third World Quarterly*, 20:1 (1999), pp. 114-15 ; Doornbos, Markakis, 'What Went Wrong in Somalia', pp. 85-6.

by AFIS was too 'Western' to be successful in *Somalia Italiana*. In fact, this model bore little consideration for 'Somali traditional structure'.<sup>68</sup>

Conversely, the argument developed in this section suggests that within the process of state-craft, a constant tension arose between the 'Western' objectives of the trusteeship system and the constant reliance on 'traditional' patterns by AFIS to fulfil the task. This led to the establishment of governing bodies and procedures, both at central and local levels, which ambivalently mixed traditional and modern elements. Theorizations of Chatterjee and Mamdani on colonial rule are important to appreciate this tension. Chatterjee addressed the core contradictions of colonial rule expressed by tensions between modernising mission and traditional ruling practice. He argues that in spite of colonial plans, the political and institutional ways in which colonial rule developed were affected by an unresolved conflict between theory and practice. In this sense, colonial rule maintained dual features that bore a 'modern' outlook, scope and aims but resorted to 'tradition' when building its governing structures. The appropriation of what was taken as 'traditional' was thus central to the attempts to construct colonial rule.<sup>69</sup>

The works of Mamdani on the features and legacies of the colonial state further investigated how this tension between modernist and traditionalist elements was met by colonial ruling strategies. In moving beyond the dual variant of direct and indirect rule, Mamdani suggests that dominion was exercised through a decentralised despotism which divided urban and rural domains, and civic and ethnic ties. In this way, it established a 'bifurcated state' with dual governing bodies, a tribally organised local authority and a distinct division between 'tribal' and 'modern', and 'subjects' and 'citizens'. By exacerbating ethnic cleavages and urban-rural divisions, this system of dominion negatively affected post-colonial performance of African states which, Mamdani contends, ultimately failed to detribalise.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Tripodi, *The Colonial Legacy*, pp. 72-3.

<sup>69</sup> Partha Chatterjee, 'Was there a Hegemonic Project of the Colonial State?', in Engels, Marks (eds.), *Contesting Colonial Hegemony*, pp. 81-3.

<sup>70</sup> Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, especially chapter 2.

Mamdani's concept of a 'bifurcated state' provides a useful tool to investigate the process of state-craft during AFIS. In pursuing a demanding plan of modernisation, AFIS established a duality of features within the institutional structures, governing bodies and decision-making processes. Where the final aim of AFIS was the construction of a democratic, western nation-state, the means through which this was achieved were embedded into a mix of 'traditional', or what was considered to be 'traditional', and modern patterns. This tension was reflected when establishing the representative councils, decision-making bodies and when drafting the criteria for conducting electoral procedures.

In addition to this, the institution of representative councils was marked by a conservative policy that favoured the predominance of traditional representation to the detriment of political parties. The establishment of the electoral procedures was instead characterised by the choice of arbitrary methods and by a clear-cut divide between rural and urban areas. These methods introduced a political discourse based on clan-belonging when competing in national elections. Moreover, the electoral system inaugurated a dualist electoral system that was clan-based at the bottom level, and centralised at the top. Appreciating the characterisations of the decision-making bodies established during this phase is important because their features strictly resembled the developments of post-independence electoral politics.

#### **4.4.1 Representative organs: Territorial, District and Municipal Councils**

One of the first actions undertaken by the administrative power in accordance with the trusteeship agreement was the creation of consultative and representative organs both at national and local level: the Territorial Council; the District Councils; the Municipal Councils. These institutions functioned as the consultative organs in dialogue with the administrative power from 1950 until 1956 when the election of the first Legislative Assembly inaugurated self-government and replaced the Territorial Council. The composition of these consultative institutions favoured community leaders and limited the representation of political parties. The establishment of representative institutions was marked by a reactionary policy that neglected the political developments of the regions in the 1940s. Whereas the

remarkable character of nationalism imagined by the Somali Youth League went beyond clan and regional affiliations, the representative organs established by AFIS stressed traditional, clan-based or local-based, ties. Furthermore, the representative bodies were enclosed into a centralised and autocratic state structure.

In 1950 a Territorial Council was established to provide consultative assistance to AFIS in the exercise of the legislative power. The Council was also created as a representative organ of Somali communities and as an advisory and intermediate body between communities and the administrative power. However, the relationship between the Council and AFIS was not on based on equal terms and conditions. In fact, the Administrator held the power to select the communities' representatives for the Council in 1950. In order to balance the power between the two, in 1951 it was decided that the Council should be elected, however, this did not happen before 1955, just a year before the introduction of self-government.<sup>71</sup>

In 1950 the Council constituted of 35 seats and distributed as follows: twenty-one clan leaders; seven representatives of the political parties; two representatives of the commercial class; two representatives of the Italian community; two representatives of the Arab/Yemeni community; one representative of the Indo-Pakistani community.<sup>72</sup> The representatives of political parties were constituted by four members of the Somali Conference, the pro-Italian umbrella political association, and three members of the Somali Youth League. The proportion of political representation within the Territorial Council remained very small compared to the number of clan leaders. The representation of political parties within the Territorial Council increased gradually but overall remained limited. In 1950 and 1951 political representation constituted one-fifth of the Territorial Council (7 out of 35 seats); in 1952 political representation represented one-quarter of the Council (11 out of 44 seats).<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Tripodi, *The Colonial Legacy*, p. 58.

<sup>72</sup> Ministero degli Affari Esteri, *Rapport du Gouvernement italien à l'Assemblée Générale des Nations Unies sur l'Administration de la Somalie placée sous la Tutelle de l'Italie, Avril 1950- Décembre 1950*, (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1951), p. 42.

<sup>73</sup> Ministero degli Affari Esteri, *Rapport du Gouvernement italien à l'Assemblée Générale des Nations Unies sur l'Administration de Tutelle de la Somalie, 1951*. (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1952), p. 41.

Similar structures were replicated at a local level where councils were established in districts and municipalities of the trust territory. These councils were characterised by a highly centralised and autocratic structure, the key positioning of the communities' representatives, and by a clear-cut divide between the 'rural' and 'urban' communities.<sup>74</sup> The District Councils, *Consigli di Residenza*, were formed in the non-municipal areas and comprised mainly communities' leaders appointed by AFIS. They functioned as consultative organ for the District Commissioners, representative of AFIS in the local administration. However their task mainly involved dealing with issues related to what was referred to as 'customary law', meaning especially the settlement of local disputes. Through the institution of local councils, the state delegated the responsibilities to communities' leaders to deal with local disputes marking a detachment of the central institutions from local issues.

The function of the District Councils was overseen over by district officers and mobile police who were entitled to resort to both persuasion and force in cases of 'growing tension' among local communities.<sup>75</sup> The twenty-seven Municipal Councils were instituted in urban areas and had consultative power on a variety of local issues. The Municipal Councils were modelled on the Mogadishu Council instituted in the 1940s by the British.<sup>76</sup> By 1956, the Municipal Councils fell under the authority of the Minister of Interior, who had the power to dissolve the councils and their mayors; the Councils' power was further limited by regional Prefects.<sup>77</sup> It is worth mentioning that while similar representative bodies were in used elsewhere in colonial Africa, they constituted a new institution in *Somalia Italiana*, with the exception of brief attempts during the fascist rule.<sup>78</sup>

A few considerations must be emphasised in relation to the representative bodies established by AFIS. First, these institutional structures were oblivious of political changes taking place across the regions in the 1940s. The super-clan and

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<sup>74</sup> There were 19 administrative districts under the BMA. In 1950 AFIS formed new districts for a total of 27 and 30 districts in 1960. The regions, called *commissariati*, were 6: Migiurtina, Mudugh, Uebi Scebeli, Benadir, Alto Giuba e Basso Giuba. «*Libro Verde*», p. 23.

<sup>75</sup> Castagno, 'Somalia', p. 354.

<sup>76</sup> Lewis, *A Modern History*, p.119.

<sup>77</sup> Castagno, 'Somalia' p. 355.

<sup>78</sup> Hess, *Italian Colonialism*, chapter 7.

super-regional feature of Somali nationalism, discussed in chapter two, was rejected in favour of a rather tight structure that stressed local and clan affiliations. Second, the political parties, which had been recognised by the Italian government as the prominent feature of the time, were given limited representation in the councils. The composition of the councils was particularly adverse to the Somali Youth League, which had made the abolition of regional and clan distinctions its main aim. Furthermore, although the League was recognised as the foremost political party of the regions it was given less representation than the pro-Italian party. Furthermore, clan-leaders assumed an important role within the advisory and consultative work of the trusteeship. On a different level, the representative councils were invested with a good deal of effective power on local issues, such as the appointment of salaries for council members.<sup>79</sup> More importantly, the Territorial Council, the most important organ of representation for Somali communities, came to be mainly composed of clan-leaders who had the task to assist AFIS legislation until 1956. As discussed later on in this chapter, the cooperation between AFIS and the Territorial Council resulted in the draft of arbitrary electoral procedures.

The governing structures established by AFIS were very different from the horizontal features of the 1940s nationalist politics. Although the overall structure of the League was highly centralised, its composition was marked by participation from below, which allowed members to elect the leadership and to contribute to the drafting of the party's political line. Conversely, the institutional structures of the post-colonial were highly verticalised. The system introduced top-down hierarchies in which the ones on the top held the power to select appointees for official positions and, thus, to control institutional bodies. On a different level, this governing system was also extremely gendered. As discussed in chapter two, the League relied upon women's organisations that carried out fundamental tasks for the party. By contrast, the post-colonial state being crafted by AFIS was restricted to male representation.

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<sup>79</sup> Their main task was to draft a series of measures with the aim to set the positions of local leaders within the councils. In other words, the consuetudinary representative system was co-opted into the new council and the retributions of its members were established. «*Libro Verde*», p. 23.

A final point to consider is in relation to the effects of the dual tribal/modern feature of the governing bodies on the management of local conflicts over resources. In this sense, Markakis contended that confrontation among groups' interests in the Horn of Africa is necessarily a political issue due to the key role played by the state in mediating between the various contenders. These conflicts have remained characterised and shaped by ethnicity as the state, which takes part in the process, is an ethno-state.<sup>80</sup> By appointing communities' leaders with local authorities and by delegating issues related to local disputes to these authorities, AFIS brought local conflicts officially into the political realm.

#### 4.4.2 The electoral procedures

In preparing for self-government and independence, four elections were scheduled by AFIS, two at municipal and two at national levels within five years. During the first phase of the trusteeship a municipal election was held in 1954 and a national election in 1956 based on universal male suffrage. However, the establishment of elections and electoral procedures did not come without problems, in particular issues arose in relation to the preparation of electoral rolls. As it will be discussed, AFIS adopted a dual strategy that mixed traditional elements with some modern patterns causing an increase of competition among different groups and producing distorted electoral results. The 1956 national consultation elected the first Legislative Assembly that replaced the Territorial Council and inaugurated the phase of self-government. During self-government, a municipal election was held in 1958 and a national election in 1959 when a second Legislative Assembly was elected to lead the country to independence and to produce the Somali constitution. The following is a discussion of the electoral system implemented during the trusteeship administration for 1954-1956, whose normative features and results were published by AFIS in 1959.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Markakis, 'Ethnic Conflict & the State', pp. 220-4.

<sup>81</sup> AFIS, Guido Natali, *Le Prime Elezioni Politiche in Somalia: 1956*, (Mogadishu: Stamperia del Governo, 1957).

In provision of the first election, AFIS had to deal with a series of practical questions that arose around the establishment of the electoral procedures. The core problematic was in relation to the census of the communities under trusteeship. A census of urban population was carried out in 1953 and provided the data for the 1954 municipal election held in 27 towns, or municipalities.<sup>82</sup> Subsequently, in preparation of the election of the Legislative Assembly in 1956, an administrative program was launched that scheduled the complete census of those communities not included in the municipalities to be undertaken before the 1956 election. However, the plans for the national-scale census were never completed and in order to integrate the data provided by the 1953 census of urban areas, alternative measures were taken. Accordingly, in each district, local colonial authorities delegated the tasks of carrying out surveys to gather personal data (*rilevazione anagrafica*) to local leaders. However, this proved to be problematic as the surveys generated competition among communities whose leaders provided exaggerated estimates. Thus, the data gathered in this way was considered extremely unreliable.<sup>83</sup>

To overcome the shortage of reliable data on the electorate, the administrative power in consultation with the Territorial Council drafted a provisional electoral law to serve for the election of the 1956 Legislative Assembly. The law legislated for a two-step national election via the use of direct method for the municipalities and indirect methods, through the use of communities' council, or *shir*, in the rural districts. At the time, the *shir* was considered by AFIS as 'customary' councils to which male members belonging to the same clan could attend in order to deal with matters of common interests.<sup>84</sup>

The electoral law decided to rely on the *shir* for the purpose of indirect elections and, consequently, different *shir* were recognised officially and given elective power by the Territorial Council. Once invested with elective power, the *shir* gathered before the Election Day electing up to five electoral representatives, or

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<sup>82</sup> The results were published by AFIS. Istituto Centrale di Statistica, *Censimento della Popolazione Italiana e Straniera della Somalia*, 4.XI. 1953 (Rome: Tip. Failli, 1958).

<sup>83</sup> Costanzo, *Problemi Costituzionali della Somalia*, p. 26.

<sup>84</sup> On the *shir* see Enrico Cerulli, *Somalia: Scritti Vari e Inediti. II L'Islam in Somalia* (a cura dell'Amministrazione Fiduciaria Italiana della Somalia) (Roma: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1957), pp. 206-10.



Greater Electors, who were considered depositary of the number of votes received during the *shir*. Subsequently, the Greater Electors were asked to participate to the direct election in the municipalities where they represented the number of votes which they claimed to have received during the *shir* and their electoral preference. Simultaneously, all the qualified voters registered at municipalities were expected to participate to direct election. It is important to note that the two different methods, indirect and direct, were given equal electoral weight.<sup>85</sup> For instance, 200 votes obtained through direct elections of qualified voters registered in the municipalities were equal to the vote of a single Greater Elector who claimed to cast ballots for 200 members of the *shir* where he was elected.

By investing the *shir* with elective power and the Greater Electors with the power to decide and claim a certain share in the decision-making process, this system altered some of the basic principles of the electoral procedures of modern representative democracies. By giving more importance to the number of votes represented by the Greater Electors, the system downplayed the single electoral preferences which necessarily came to be reduced to a few variables. Moreover, this particular usage of indirect voting methods introduced a distorted approach to electoral competition which did not take place among political parties but rather among different communities. From a different point of view, this system introduced an attitude to democratic and governing processes that centred on the exclusive investment and importance given to the Greater Electors. This exclusive feature reflected the ruling attitude that characterised AFIS as a whole, as it has been discussed throughout the chapter.

Because no reliable data on the regional composition of the electorate was available, the distribution of seats within the Legislative Assembly was, at this time, not fixed but subject to electoral results. That is, the Districts with more resulting number of votes were considered to be the most densely populated and thus given more representation in the Legislative Assembly. It appears evident that the whole electoral system focused on the resulting number of votes; the ‘number’ therefore became central within the political competition especially in the process of indirect

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<sup>85</sup> AFIS, *Le Prime Elezioni Politiche*, p. 128.

elections where figures of electorate were essentially non-existent. The system was therefore susceptible to electoral tampering that, unsurprisingly, happened. The records of AFIS for the 1956 national election reported a general trend of exaggeration of the number of votes represented by the Greater Electors and so for each districts. This trend was already registered during the surveys to gather personal data before the elections where paradoxically, the total number of ballots resulting from the surveys not only exceeded the estimated number of qualified voters based on universal male suffrage, but it also exceeded the number of population estimates, which was 1.2 million, that included those social sections, women and children, who were not qualified to vote.<sup>86</sup> Similarly, the electoral results were thus considered very unsatisfactory:

It became evident that the electoral results produced by the communities living outside the urban areas, which constitute most of the electorate, was distorted: for instance the consuetudinary assemblies [sic!]<sup>87</sup>, the *shir*, where indirect elections were held in order to choose the Greater Electors («electoral representatives») artificially exaggerated the number of votes for the [1956] election.<sup>88</sup>

Given these unsatisfactory results, the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations recommended the drafting a new electoral law in case no national census of Somali communities was undertaken: in that eventuality, the Trusteeship Council recommended that ‘a new electoral law is to be taken under examination as soon as possible to guarantee the free election of the Legislative Assembly so that the state structure will be ready by December 1960.’<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Castagno, ‘Somalia’, p.356-7. In 1957, further attempts to quantify the electorate produced even more unrealistic data which had to be discarded, as reported by the British Consulate in Mogadishu: ‘The census, being taken to enable electoral rolls to be prepared for an individual and secret vote to be given to every qualified Somali next year, had become a farce. The population of Somalia, according to the results so far received, is well over 7 million inhabitants and nine towns like El Bur and Obbia have populations of nearly a quarter of a million each!... real figure about 1,250,000 for the whole territory’, British Consulate-General, Mogadishu, ‘Monthly Summary for the Period October and November, 1957’, 1<sup>st</sup> December 1957, no. JG/013/12; ‘Monthly Summaries on Somalia from December 1956 to November 1957’, TNA, FO 371/125676.

<sup>87</sup> During AFIS, the *shir* were commonly referred to as *assemblee consuetudinarie*, i.e. consuetudinary assemblies. See footnote below.

<sup>88</sup> Costanzo, *Problemi Costituzionali della Somalia*, p. 27. Translations from Italian have been edited slightly.

<sup>89</sup> Trusteeship Council, UN XXII session, on the elections in Somalia in *Ibid.*

Apart from the electoral tampering, the electoral procedures had several deficiencies. The recognition of the elective *shir* was subject to an arbitrary process that gave the power to qualify the *shir* with elective character to the Territorial Council, whose majority was composed by clan leaders. Further concerns related to the representativeness claimed by the *shir*: the *shir* was not only a gendered organ of representation but its composition was not representative of the whole male population. Instead, it was conventionally constituted by all men belonging to the same clan or sub-clan considered ‘able to fight’.<sup>90</sup>

A further deficiency of the indirect voting methods was in relation to the representation of minority groups. Several minority or low-status groups, especially in the agriculturist regions, were bound to a client-status relation with Somali clans and did not enjoy fair representation within the ‘customary’ councils.<sup>91</sup> The electoral law allowed minority groups to take part in the *shir* held by bigger groups. However, the patterns according which this process happened, if it did at all, remained undefined and left space for the possibility that certain minority groups went unrepresented.<sup>92</sup> Moreover, as the system of indirect voting centred on clan belonging, individuals with different belongings but within the same community were excluded from taking part to the *shir*.<sup>93</sup> The *shir*, conventionally considered at the base of pastoral democracy, was an essentially spontaneous institution that gathered when there was the need to discuss local issues.<sup>94</sup> Instead, the electoral law formalised the institutions of *shir* and co-opted its system into a pre-defined and over-imposed structure that was directed to a vertical and national scope.

Furthermore, the electoral system centred on local clan and the role of communities’ leaders. This circumstance forced political parties to address their propaganda to community leaders in contrast to the practices developed in the 1940s. Moreover, because the system introduced a duality of practices, the political propaganda had to adopt different strategies. Somali political space was encapsulated

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<sup>90</sup> According to the definition given in the electoral law, the *shir* were formed by ‘all men who are able to carry a sword’. AFIS, *Le Prime Elezioni Politiche*, p. 127.

<sup>91</sup> Menkhaus, ‘Bantu Ethnic Identity’, pp. 325-7.

<sup>92</sup> AFIS, *Le Prime Elezioni Politiche*, p. 127-8.

<sup>93</sup> Tripodi, *The Colonial Legacy*, pp. 78-80.

<sup>94</sup> See Lewis, *A Pastoral Democracy*, p. 239.

in a centralised structure with a well-defined vertical hierarchy that reinforced the clan-links as means to access power and control of the state. Post-independence Somali politics were characterised by a dualist feature clan/local-base at the bottom level and national/unitary at the top level. Mamdani links a similar fragmentation of politics along ethnic/kin lines to the features of colonial legacy for the cases of Uganda and South Africa.<sup>95</sup> In Somalia, similar trends are traceable following the first national elections conducted on 29 February 1956, the introduction of self-government and formation of Legislative Assembly, as it will be analysed in the next chapter.

Appreciating the decentralised character of the state-system crafted by AFIS is important for a broader understanding of the historical trajectory of the post-colonial state. Such analysis makes a contribution to those studies that are concerned with the predominance of a clan-based discourse in Somali politics. Self-government marked the beginning of a short-lived multi-party system during which five elected governments came to power and the number of political parties proliferated. The democracy that was eventually replaced by Siad Barre's military coup in 1969<sup>96</sup> has been described as a very fragile institution incapable of overcoming the primordialist divisions of Somali society.<sup>97</sup> Accordingly, attempts at nation-building by successive Somali governments were constantly challenged by the centrifugal forces of kinship that eventually overwhelmed the democracy.<sup>98</sup> The governments were subject to 'the logic of kinship' and the problematic policy of balancing clan representation within the Assembly did not hinder the consolidation of political factionalism.<sup>99</sup> In the

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<sup>95</sup> Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*.

<sup>96</sup> The Supreme Revolutionary Council was the political organ that ruled Somalia at the coup. The Somali Revolutionary Socialist Party was formed by the regime in 1976 under Soviet influence and lasted until the regime was overthrown in 1991. For details on the coup see Luigi Pestalozza, *Somalia: Cronaca delle Rivoluzione, 21 Ottobre 1969* (Bari: Dedalo Libri, 1973); Samatar, *Socialist Somalia*, chapters 4-5.

<sup>97</sup> For an account of republican politics and elections see Ioan M. Lewis, 'The Politics of the 1969 Somali Coup', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 10:3(1972). See also Hussein A. Bulhan, *Politics of Cain: One Hundred Years of Crises in Somali Politics and Society*, (Bethesda, Maryland: Tayosan International Publishing, 2008), pp. 78-110.

<sup>98</sup> Lewis, *A Modern History*, pp. 166-78; David D. Laitin, 'The Political Economy of Military Rule in Somalia', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 14:3 (1976), pp. 451-2.

<sup>99</sup> So Clarke and Gosende: 'The post-independence civilian government in Somalia proved to be experimental, inefficient, corrupt, and incapable of creating any kind of political culture. The Somali

1960s, the political competition of an increasing number of clan-based parties - 64 parties presented 1,002 candidates to compete for 123 parliamentary seats in 1969 - tore apart the national and social fabric while the political elites were deeply absorbed in pursuing their private interests.<sup>100</sup> Historical patterns leading to politics fragmentation must be at least partially traced back to the electoral procedures adopted by AFIS that imposed a local clan-based fragmented consultation to cast ballots and access national politics.

## 4.5 Conclusion

This chapter dealt with the process of ‘verticalisation’ of the Somali political space by looking at the democratising programmes carried out by AFIS. As underscored in chapter two, one of the distinctive features of Somali politics in the 1940s was the emergence and proliferation of nationalist movements as a response to the vacuum of power following the Italian defeat and the adoption of partially liberal policies on civil rights. Due to the challenges and opportunities offered by wartime, the British military rule, and by the international debate over former Italian colonies, Somali nationalism promoted a horizontal structure characterised by super-regional and super-clan features. The immediate outcome of the imposition of a 10-year international trusteeship was the centralisation of national politics at a state level and the revival of pre-war links between the former colonial masters and certain segments of Somali society. As discussed throughout the chapter, the state-construction during AFIS imposed a series of institutional patterns that separated the elites from the masses, thus creating two different social categories. It revived the importance of clan-based and region-focused authority while also introducing a clear-cut distinction between rural and urban areas. In this way, the state emerging under trusteeship administration came to be in stark contrast with the features of the nation imagined by modern nationalism in the 1940s.

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political system quickly devolved into the dynamics of clan scheming and disputes.’ Walter Clarke, Robert Gosende ‘Somalia: Can a Collapsed State Reconstitute Itself?’, in Rotberg, *State Failure and State Weakness*, p. 133

<sup>100</sup> Schraeder, ‘From Irredentism to Secession’, p. 117.

In exploring the particular trajectory of the decolonisation process in Somalia, the chapter examined the concept and structure of the Trusteeship System of the UN. The System granted the creation of self-government and independence for Somalia promoting a progressive international policy towards decolonisation. It further provided guidelines, supervision and support to both the trust power and administered communities. As a political system, however, it had several shortcomings. Despite the clarity of the aims of the System, the UN did not develop a debate on what forms of self-government to promote and what kind of independent state to establish. Moreover the System came to be subject to the conflicting interests of the Cold War leading to restoration of former Italian rule under different terms. Within this context, Somali nationalists were forced to accept the UN decisions the conditions imposed by the Trusteeship System. Consequentially and despite representing a progressive attitude of international community towards colonial rule, the implementation of the trusteeship in Somalia was characterised by distinctively reactionary features.

By exploring the ways in which the Trusteeship System was structured, it was argued that the UN had, in fact, very limited contact with the administrated communities. The Trusteeship System entailed a privileged position to the administrative power, which had effective control over the trust region but not the ultimate responsibility for its administration and was not obliged to adopt the UN's recommendations. As noted by Pungong, the conservative policy-making that affected the institution of the Trusteeship System after the Second World War, created a system which 'left the administering power such a free hand...[and] seriously blur[red] the distinction between Trust territory and ordinary colonies'.<sup>101</sup> As a result, the Somali state that emerged from the trusteeship did not differ from other post-colonial states in Africa and bore similar autocratic, centralised features of post-colonial states.

On a different level, the chapter has argued that the plan of democratisation carried out by AFIS was characterised by a constant tension between its modernising scopes and the 'traditional' practices in use. From this perspective, the chapter

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<sup>101</sup> Pungong, 'The United States and the International Trusteeship System', p. 85.

challenged previous interpretations that claimed the state system imposed by AFIS to be too 'Western' to be effective in Somalia. Conversely, the chapter underscored how plans to establish a modern, democratic regime took shape through the institution of governing structures that were ambivalently clan-based, or 'traditional', at the bottom level and 'modern' at the top level. In this sense, the duality of the state crafted by AFIS resembled Mamdani's theorisation of decentralised despotism inherited by the post-colonial state, thus alienating the majority of the population from the state, its institutions and power.

Finally the chapter investigated the attitude to power adopted by the Italian authority during the trusteeship. Due to the limitations of the Trusteeship Council and the ambiguities of the System, the trust power held a powerful position which implied unaccountable freedom to act and to establish modes and patterns of the administration. As explored in the case of the institution of representative councils, this power included the faculty to decide who would be included and who excluded from key state positions. In this way, top hierarchies were invested with the exclusive power to include. This faculty proved to be crucial within the process of formation of political leadership (as seen in the case of scholarship programmes) and the 'Somalisation' of the state. As next chapter discusses, this attitude to power was inherited by Somali-led government following the introduction of self-government in 1956. From this moment onwards, Somali governments would lead the process of state-craft and the appointment of Somalis to institutional posts in replacing Italians. This legacy had major effects on the process of state-building and as chapter six argues, on the process of 1960 Somali unification.

## Chapter 5: ‘This is political immaturity’: Introducing self-government, curbing dissent and establishing the ‘*Monocolore*’ State

### 5.1 Introduction

In exploring the features of the governing bodies established by the trust power (AFIS), the previous chapter discussed how, within the process of democratisation, great emphasis was placed on issues such as elections, electoral procedures, and quantification of the electorate. The peculiar ways through which these processes were carried out enhanced competition among different groups rather than political parties. A tension was highlighted between the modernist aims of the trusteeship and the traditional features of the state-craft leading to the institution of an ambivalent and distorted ruling system which was characterised by a ‘decentralised despotism’. Within this system, top-hierarchies were invested with the power to decide who would be included or excluded from the structures of power. All these aspects were inherited by the Somali-led Legislative Assembly, which was elected in 1956, marking the establishment of self-government.

Conventionally, the phase of self-government has been described as the moment in which the modernist features of Somali nationalism, (i.e. the Somali Youth League) came at odds with the traditionally divisive nature of the clan system. In particular, the work of the legislative assemblies clashed with the ‘[non] rational approach to economic and social problem’ which characterised the clan system.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, the governing bodies led by the League were challenged by the particularistic interests of the southern clans, represented by the Hizbia Digil & Mirifle, and by the wider cleavages within the League between the Daarood and Hawiya supporters.<sup>2</sup> As a result, the parliamentary system remained a rather fragile and ineffective institution due to ‘partly a matter of conflicting policies, partly a

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<sup>1</sup> Touval, *Somali Nationalism*, p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> Lewis, *A Modern History*, chapter 7, especially pp. 156-61.



struggle for power between individuals, and at the same time also a question of competing clan interests.’<sup>3</sup>

Despite providing valuable insights on the interrelations between clan-based interests and national politics, these analyses tend to ignore the role played by the institutional framework set up by AFIS in shaping Somali political space and discourse. By looking at the work of the two elected assemblies (in 1956 and 1959) led by the Somali Youth League, this chapter sheds light on the ways in which the peculiarities of the trusteeship system affected the development of everyday politics in Somalia. It argues that self-government marked the beginning of ‘spoils politics’<sup>4</sup> and led to the establishment of what came to be known as the ‘*Monocolore*’ state (literally the system government dominated by a ‘single colour’, i.e. by a single party)<sup>5</sup> On the one hand, this dominant-party system was characterised by an autocratic and repressive phase during which the rule of the majority remained uncontested and the attempts to challenge it unsuccessful. After obtaining the majority of seats in the Assembly, the League’s leadership occupied the key institutional posts previously held by the Italians and made a systematic use of these posts to consolidate its power. By 1956 dissent emerged within the League partially fostered by the competing forces of the Cold War. In facing the dissent, the governments led by the League ratified a series of restrictive legislations with the aim of concentrating power in the hands of the ruling party, to monopolise the Somali political space and to silence the opposition. In doing so, the League secured

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<sup>3</sup> Lewis, *A Modern History*, p. 161.

<sup>4</sup> Allen, ‘Understanding African Politics’, pp. 307-12.

<sup>5</sup> Between 1953 and 1957, the term ‘*monocolore*’ (or ‘*governo del monocolore*’, i.e. monochromatic government) was widely used in Italy to indicate the dominant-party system in which the Christian Democrats (*Democrazia Cristiana*) formed seven consecutive governments preventing the opposition from contributing to the making of legislation. See Paul Ginsborg, *Storia dell’Italia dal Dopoguerra a Oggi: Società e Politica 1943-1988*, (Turin: Einaudi, 1989), chapter 5.

In 1957, just a year after the formation of the first Legislative Assembly, the main opposition party, the HDM, addressed a letter to the UN commission visiting the trust territory in which the party denounced that ‘the AFIS has not fulfilled the mandate entrusted to it by the U.N.O. but has merely looked after the interests of the Italian concessionaires... [and] it gave the Somali Youth League carte blanche to act as it chose during the holding of the Scir [i.e. shir, assemblies used during the indirect election in 1956] in order to obtain a majority in the elections and then set up a *monocolore* Government, Police Corps, civil service etc.’ Central Committee of the Hizbia Dighil & Mirifle (H.D.M.) to the United Nations Commission, Mogadishu, 19<sup>th</sup> July 1957; in ‘Internal Political Situation in Somalia’, TNA, FO 371/131459.

the majority of votes, excluded the opposition from power, and crushed the growing dissent within and outside the party.

On the other hand, the establishment of self-government marked the beginning of spoils politics in Somalia. In fact, due to the centrality of elections within the process of democratisation, the ruling party was in constant need of electorate backing. For this reason, the leadership of the League decided to negotiate share of power with the opposition leaders especially with members of the HDM. In this way, the ruling party used its positions to keep control of the state and to reward key supporters and members of the opposition by the appointment of government posts. The emergence of a political discourse based on clan needs to be understood within this context of restricted political space, politics of patronage, and constant electoral competition. Although clan interests played a role in influencing the work of the governing bodies, the chapter suggests that the evolution of a clan-based discourse should be understood as a reaction to the autocratic policy of the Somali government rather than the cause of its failure.

At first, the chapter discusses how the Somali government dealt with dissent and the instruments that it used to silence it. Especially, the chapter looks at how the emergence of dissent within the League was coupled with the (mis)use of a clan discourse. By discussing the drafting of a new electoral law, the chapter then looks at the ways in which the League prevented the opposition from accessing power. It argues that the centralising strategy adopted by the government led to the suppression of sections of the opposition that merged in the League. This chapter suggests that it was only in the context of restricted political competition and curbed opposition that clan became an alternative means to articulate dissent, access the state and challenge the monopoly of the League. Finally the chapter considers the positive and negative sides of the experience of self-government in *Somalia Italiana*.. It argues that although the formation of the Assembly represented a very important moment within the process of Somalization of the Somali state, i.e. the devolution of power and responsibilities to a Somali-led government, its establishment proved problematic. Due to a demanding development plan, state-building was characterised by misuse of power and by fragile separation of powers.

## 5.2 Establishing self-government: the first Legislative Assembly

On 30 April 1956, the first elected parliament, namely the Legislative Assembly, was formed in *Somalia Italiana*. The Assembly headed the decolonisation plan established by AFIS that gave a great deal of autonomy to the Somali government. Moreover, the Assembly inherited the culture of dominion established by AFIS which invested top-hierarchies with the exclusive power to complete the process of decolonisation and of ‘Somalisation’ of the state by appointing Somalis to key institutional posts. This exclusive position allowed the ruling party to establish the ‘*Monocolore*’ state, to curb dissent, and to negotiate power sharing with opposition leaders.

The Trusteeship System scheduled a demanding programme of legislation for the Assembly whose main task was the establishment of the political, administrative and juridical bodies of the Somali Republic. Special committees had to be formed in order to draft the civil, penal, military and labour codes as well as the codes of penal and civil procedure. Moreover, bills on citizenship, press, health, education and economic systems had to be drafted. In doing so, the Legislative Assembly was initially supervised by AFIS whose approval was needed before any law was passed. In turn, the UN advised the Italian Administration on any law the government submitted. However, by May 1957 the Italian Administrator withheld his right to prior scrutiny leaving the government completely in charge of domestic issues. The formation of the Legislative Assembly thus marked the process through which the Somali government took control of the administration while both AFIS and the UN quit their nominal responsibility for Somalia. The following sections discuss step by step the establishment of ‘*Monocolore*’ state in Somalia. It is discussed the question of how a controversial system of representation allowed the Somali Youth League to amass a strong majority in the Assembly. The League was able to consolidate its power by ratifying restrictive legislation that crushed dissent within the party, and instrumentally used the clan system. Finally, by drafting a new electoral law the League guaranteed their re-election.

### **5.2.1 A strong majority, an unquantifiable victory: the controversial system of representation**

The 1956 election reported a strong victory for the Somali Youth League. Two leaders of the party, Aden Abdullah Osman and Abdullaahi Isse Mahamuud, were nominated President and Prime Minister of the Assembly respectively. Subsequently they formed a government of 6 ministers and a series of under-secretaries who all belonged to the League. The 1956 Legislative Assembly was constituted of 70 seats with 60 elected members and 10 seats distributed among minority ethnic groups.<sup>6</sup> The adoption of the Italian system of representation, which allocated the 60 parliamentary seats according to regional population, favoured the Somali Youth League, the only party to present a list of nominees in all constituencies but one. The electoral results reported in Table 5.1 confirm the strong victory of the Somali Youth League, which was awarded 43 seats out of 60. However, a closer look at the electoral results reveals that the League was given a parliamentary representation bigger than the proportion of actual votes won. In 5 constituencies out of 25, the League was the only party to present lists of nominees for the elections. Due to this circumstance, no elections were held in these 5 constituencies and their seats were allocated *a priori* to the League.

Although the electoral system had the merits to allocate a solid majority to the winning party, the decision to rely on the Italian proportional system of representation proved controversial. As discussed in chapter four, not only had the electoral system established by AFIS shown flaws and inadequacies that seriously undermined the validity of the electoral results, but no electoral rolls were completed before the election. In fact, AFIS did not undertake a nation-wide census of the electorate as prescribed by the trusteeship agreement with the UN. Therefore, the decision to distribute the parliamentary seats based on regional population became problematic since it could not rely on electoral registers but on the ‘unsatisfactory’

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<sup>6</sup> The 10 seats were so distributed: 4 to the Arab community; 1 to the Indian Community; 4 to the Italian Community; 1 to the Pakistan community. According to the then British Consul in Mogadishu, Tony Kendall, these MPs hardly challenged the government: ‘The Italians usually vote with the Government; the Arabs with the Government, except when religious factors are involved; the Indian and the Pakistani rarely speak and are watchdogs of their communities’ economic interests.’ A. Kendall, ‘From Mogadishu to Foreign Office’, 22<sup>nd</sup> February, telegram no. 45; ‘Internal Political Situation in Somalia’, TNA, FO 371/131460.

and ‘incomplete’ pre-electoral statistical surveys.<sup>7</sup> Although the surveys were considered unreliable, they were still used to establish the regional representation in the Assembly by giving more or less electoral weight to the constituencies. Some of the constituencies where no elections were held were also believed to be densely populated. For instance, that was the case of the constituencies Beledweyne, Bulobarde and Afmadoow (respectively number 9, 10 and 25 in Table 5.1) where the League was the only party to present electoral lists. In this way, a quarter of the elected parliamentary seats (14 out 60) was allocated with no electoral competition to the League. This lack of competition allowed the party to establish a strong control over the Legislative Assembly.

	Electoral college	No. seats	Electors	Voters	% vote	Valid votes	Void votes	SYL	No. seats SYL	HDM	No. seats HDM
1	Boosaaso	1	16,638	16,277	97.83	16,276	1	8,723	1	--	--
2	Raas Caluula	1	21,303	21,021	98.68	20,879	142	16,112	1	--	--
3	Sool	2	32,992	32,785	99.40	32,779	16	16,112	1	--	--
4	Nuugal Daror	4	51,595	51,245	99.32	51,235	10	48,904	4	--	--
5	Gaalkacyo	3	45,476	45,283	99.57	45,265	18	41,097	3	--	--
6	Dhuusamarreeb	2	21,537	21,458	99.63	21,444	14	18,053	2	--	--
7	Hoby	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	--	--
8	Ceel Buur	3	36,280	36,090	99.48	36,082	8	19,548	2	--	--
9	Baladweyne	3	--	--	--	--	--	--	3	--	--
10	Buulo Barde	5	--	--	--	--	--	--	5	--	--
11	Baydhabo	4	57,684	56,717	98.34	56,667	50	21,724	2	28,890	2
12	Buur Hakaba	5	64,736	63,390	97.92	63,215	175	3,204	--	52,231	5
13	Bardheere	1	16,099	15,819	98.26	15,708	111	7,890	1	7,818	--
14	Luuq	1	19,957	19,767	99.04	19,756	11	4,284	--	4,114	--
15	Oddur	3	42,410	42,280	99.69	41,527	753	8,939	--	32,559	3
16	Diinsoor	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1
17	Mogadishu	1	14,252	13,319	93.45	13,190	129	6,622	1	2,023	--
18	Afgooye	2	24,258	22,351	92.13	22,156	195	2,644	--	9,678	1
19	Marka	2	27,359	23,268	85.11	22,849	437	13,064	2	2,406	--
20	Baraawe	2	29,278	28,893	98.68	28,868	25	10,155	1	11,022	1
21	Balcad	3	38,464	37,542	97.60	37,417	125	27,078	3	--	--
22	Adale	2	--	--	--	--	--	--	2	--	--
23	Kismaayo	2	30,517	30,349	99.45	30,324	25	29,388	2	510	--
24	Jamaame-Jilib	3	41,272	40,045	97.03	39,272	773	30,646	3	8,626	--
25	Afmadow	3	--	--	--	--	--	--	3	--	--
Total		60	632,927	617,927	97.75	614,909	3,018	333,820	43	159,967	13

**Table 5.1:** Results of the 1956 national election. Compiled from *Il Corriere della Somalia*.

<sup>7</sup> Costanzo, *Problemi Costituzionali della Somalia*, p. 26.

The peculiarity of the system of representation did not go unnoticed among the Somali public in the trust region but actually generated a sense of mistrust of the electoral process. The local newspaper *Il Corriere della Somalia*, that followed and documented the elections and electoral campaign, received several letters from the readers asking clarifications on the mechanisms through which parliamentary seats were distributed. Soon after the elections, for instance, a certain Iusuf Guled wrote to the editor wondering the reasons why the parliamentary share of the League did not reflect the proportion of votes cast. He made the point extremely clear:

How come the Somali Youth League has been awarded 43 seats with 333,780 votes and the Hizbia Dighil & Mirifle who won 159,932 votes, half of the votes won by League, has been awarded 13 seats only?<sup>8</sup>

This query expressed the core of the controversy: although the League won by a ratio of 2:1 (333,780 votes won by the League versus 159,932 won by the HDM), it was given a parliamentary majority by a ratio of 3:1 (43 seats to the League versus 13 to the HDM). This strong majority was due to the allocation of seats with no electoral competition. Clearly, within the competition between the two main parties, the system of representation significantly favoured the League. At the same time, it caused problems for other parties, as the HDM which amassed votes in specific areas only.

### 5.2.2 Consolidating the League's power

Despite the fact that the first national election confirmed the League as the majority party, it appeared clear that the foremost opposition party, the HDM, had strong supporters in certain colleges, as Baydhabo, Burhakaba and Xuddur (respectively n. 11, 12, 15 on Table 5.1). As AFIS placed great emphasis on electoral competition and more elections were scheduled before the end of the trusteeship, consolidating power became the main concern of the League. The task was made possible due to the institutional framework established by AFIS that gave a great deal of power to

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<sup>8</sup> 'Letters from the audience', *Il Corriere della Somalia*, 4<sup>th</sup> March 1956.

the Legislative Assembly. As mentioned, by May 1957 the legislation of the Somali government was not subject to AFIS scrutiny but the Legislative Assembly had full and uncontested control over domestic issues.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, nothing prevented the League from ratifying legislation to increase the government's powers. One of the first laws passed by the Assembly gave extraordinary powers to the Government for a year. In particular, legislative arrangements increased the government's power on issues related to public security including the faculty to order summary arrest among those suspected of acting against the public order.<sup>10</sup> This law was justified due to the 'delicate political situation in Somalia'<sup>11</sup> but, in fact, gave a free hand over internal affairs to the League.

Other legislative arrangements passed by the Somali government ensured its control over radio broadcasts and press.<sup>12</sup> From this point onwards, *Il Corriere della Somalia*, already characterised by a pro-government line, became controlled by the Somali government that supervised Radio Mogadishu as well. Due to the government's interference with the radio broadcasts, the Director of the Radio, Ahmed Mohamed Alore resigned in December 1956 and his replacement was nominated by the government.<sup>13</sup> The government's control over radio broadcasts was central to controlling political propaganda. If the *Corriere*, mainly written in Italian, sold circa two thousand copies daily,<sup>14</sup> radio broadcasts reached a broader audience. An elderly Somali interviewed for this research recalled that listening to the radio was a key part of social interaction at the time. Radio broadcasts constituted a very efficient means to spreading news all over the Somali-speaking regions: groups of people used to come together to listen to the news, poetry and songs and information

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<sup>9</sup> AFIS was still in charge of the foreign affairs. However in December 1957, AFIS allowed the Prime Minister, the President of the Assembly and Minister of Interior to accept an invitation from Haile Selassie to visit Ethiopia without Italian representatives. During the visit, reported as extremely successful and friendly, the Somali delegation travelled to Khartoum, where they were hosted by the Government, to Djibouti and Hargeysa. A. C. Kendall, British Consulate-General, Mogadishu, 18<sup>th</sup> December, 1957, no. 22 (1018/57), JG/015/6, in 'Internal Political Situation in Somalia', TNA, FO 371/131459.

<sup>10</sup> Costanzo, *Problemi costituzionali della Somalia*, p. 88.

<sup>11</sup> *Il Corriere della Somalia*, 10<sup>th</sup> December 1958.

<sup>12</sup> Lewis, 'Modern Political Movements in Somaliland. II', p.353 (see footnote).

<sup>13</sup> His successor was Abdi Mohamed Namus. 'Monthly Summary for December, 1956', British Consulate, Mogadishu, no. JG/013/1, in TNA, FO 371/125676.

<sup>14</sup> In 1956, a section in Arabic was included in the *Corriere*.

gathered in this way propagated quickly from mouth to mouth, from town to countryside.<sup>15</sup> Other newspapers and magazines were founded and published every now and then but operated under the close scrutiny of the ruling party.<sup>16</sup>

### 5.2.3 Dealing with internal dissent

The formation of the Legislative Assembly generated dissent among some sections of the Somali Youth League because of disagreement over the leadership's pro-Italian policy.<sup>17</sup> As chapters two and four have discussed, although the League emerged in 1943 as a nationalist anti-colonial, i.e. anti-Italian, political organisation, by the mid-1950s its policy had changed radically. Due to the two-fold strategy adopted by AFIS that repressed political activities while appealing to political leaders, the League's leadership decided to engage in dialogue with the Italians in contrast with the original strategy of the party. The shift was consolidated with the formation of the 1956 Somali government and marked the beginning of a collaborative period between the Somali government and AFIS. This attitude was clearly expressed by the new president of the Legislative Assembly, Aden Abdullah Osman, in public statements made soon after the national election:

We, the Somalis, will fully support their work [of the Italian Administration]... We are also in need of help from friends and, knowing the Italians, we are sure that only the Italians could provide us with such help.<sup>18</sup>

The new political orientation of the League was met by a certain degree of dissent within the party: on the one hand, a section of the League favoured a more radical attitude towards AFIS which was perceived as a continuation of the colonial rule; on the other, a section, composed of communities' and religious leaders, was unhappy with the allegedly 'secular' line of the leadership.<sup>19</sup> Within this context, the competing forces of the Cold War played a remarkable role in determining political

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<sup>15</sup> Interview with Ahmed Ali Hibrahim, 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2009, Hargeysa.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Benvenuto Francesco Isaaq, 5<sup>th</sup> October 2010, Rome.

<sup>17</sup> As discussed in the next chapter, the leadership of the League considered also to adopt a pro-Commonwealth policy due to the plans of the unification with the British Somaliland.

<sup>18</sup> *Il Corriere della Somalia*, 13<sup>th</sup> March 1956.

<sup>19</sup> Adam, 'Islam and Politics in Somalia', pp. 199-201.



orientation and shaping dissent. In chapters three and four we have seen how the formation of the League was influenced by the BMA and by the local branch of the Italian communist party in Mogadishu. Conversely, the formation of other political parties, as the HDM, was influenced and supported by Italian colonial clerks. Throughout the 1950s, Somali political organisations were targeted by the propaganda of external powers: the USSR, for instance, attempted unsuccessfully to make of the League a communist organisation.<sup>20</sup> More efficacious was instead the propaganda of the Egyptian government that targeted these 'unhappy' sections of the League with the aim of building up a pro-Third World front.<sup>21</sup> As it will be discussed, this influence contributed to a split within the League and to the consolidation of the autocratic policy of the ruling party.

Since the mid-1950s, the Egyptian government intensely invested in Somali education. The historic koranic schools with large nationwide presence, the *dugsi*,<sup>22</sup> were paralleled by the establishment of new schools which, based on Egyptian curricula, favoured the teaching of Islamic history and tradition as well as the Arabic language.<sup>23</sup> Moreover and in order to counterbalance the education programmes offered by AFIS, a conspicuous number of scholarships was made available for the Somali pupils to pursue their degrees in Egypt.<sup>24</sup> In this way, Egypt became one of the major supporters, second to Italy only, of secondary and university education for Somalis offering a total of 683 scholarships during the trusteeship administration.<sup>25</sup> It should be noted that similar scholarships were also offered to pupils of the British

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<sup>20</sup> Author unknown, 'Communist activities in Somalia', undated, unreferenced. ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 12.

<sup>21</sup> Antonio M. Morone, 'L'Egitto di Nasser e la formazione dello Stato somalo: influenze politiche, interazioni culturali e identità nazionale' *Contemporanea*, XIII:4(2010).

<sup>22</sup> On the *dugsi* see Mohamed Abdi Mohamed, 'Retour vers les dugsi, écoles coraniques en Somalie', *Cahiers d'Études Africaines*, XLIII(2003); Federico Battera 'Rapporti Storici fra il Benadir, la Penisola Arabica e l'Africa Orientale', *Africana*, (1996).

<sup>23</sup> See Morone, *L'Ultima Colonia*, pp. 169-70.

<sup>24</sup> Somali students in Cairo were closely watched over by the Egyptian Government which repatriated a few and arrested others on the charge of spying for the British government. British Consulate, 'Monthly Summary for January, 1957: Part B', Mogadishu, JG/013/2, in TNA, FO 371/125676. The influences of Soviet Union and of the USA on Somali politics became important in the late 1960s only. See for instance, Gary D. Payton, 'The Somali Coup of 1969: The Case for Soviet Complicity', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 18:3(1980); Lefebvre, *Arms for the Horn*, part III.

<sup>25</sup> Morone, *L'Ultima Colonia*, p. 170.

Somaliland.<sup>26</sup> This circumstance led to the formation of a Somali Office in Cairo, a socio-political club that promoted Somali students' interaction whose activities will be analysed in detail in the next chapter.

The Egyptian involvement in Somali education influenced internal political development especially due to the close connection with one of the long-standing leaders of the League, Haji Mohamed Hussein. Supported by Egyptian funding, the Somali leader was able to catalyse the dissent within the party and to form a faction that challenged the government's policy by favouring a pro-Egyptian alignment.

Haji Mohamed Hussein belonged to the Rer Hamar, the inhabitants of Hamarwayne, the historical downtown of Mogadishu. As a young man, he worked briefly for the Italian colonial administration and in 1943 was among the 13 founding members of the League. He soon became an important political figure and was elected to the presidency of the party serving in the period between 1946 and 1951. Mohamed is today remembered for having been very committed and passionate about politics: he was also 'a great orator with a strong determination against injustice and inequality'.<sup>27</sup> He combined religious beliefs with leftist political orientation and strong anti-colonial, i.e. anti-Italian, positions. He took an active part in the riots against the Italians in Mogadishu 1948 and was for this reason, much disliked by AFIS. When the Italian authority was restored by the UN in 1950, Haji Mohamed Hussein authored a series of articles in certain Egyptian newspapers in which he deeply criticised AFIS.<sup>28</sup> In 1951, he won a scholarship and left for Egypt where he lived until 1957, when he was re-elected as chairman of the League and returned to Mogadishu.

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<sup>26</sup> It is very common to find Somalis in their 60s who have pursued secondary education or university training in Egypt. Fieldwork notes, July 2009, Hargeysa.

<sup>27</sup> Interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2009.

<sup>28</sup> A collection of these articles has been gathered by AFIS and stored with no reference in one of the AFIS's files. Although very fragmented, the file offers interesting insights on the nature of the articles. For instance in an article published by *Al Misri*, 25<sup>th</sup> June 1950, Haji Mohamed Hussein accused the Italian administration of abusing power and persecuting the Somalis. At the time, links between Egypt and Somali movements caused some concerns among AFIS. In 1950 a new party, called the Islamic League (*Lega Islamica*) was founded with Egyptian support with the aim to promote Pan-Africanism among all Muslim population in Africa. The party however did not make any progress. ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 9, busta 2. On the links between Egypt and Somali political parties during the Italian trusteeship see Morone, 'L'Egitto di Nasser'.

The occasion of the presidential election of the League marked the climax of the conflict within the party.<sup>29</sup> Scheduled in July 1957, the elections were a crucial time for the League in three key ways: first, for the first time all branches of the party were called for electing the president;<sup>30</sup> second, by choosing the new president of the League, the elections also indicated the party candidate for the national elections and for the post of Head of State; third, the new leadership had the important task to lead the work on the Somali Constitution. Two candidates ran for the presidency: the president of the Legislative Assembly, Aden Abdullah Osman supported by AFIS; and the former party chairman Haji Mohamed Hussein backed by Egyptian government. The victory of Haji Mohamed Hussein over the Aden Abdullah Osman was therefore a defeat of the Somali government. The electoral results also indicated a regional divide within the League according to which the more peripheral districts of Mijertein, Mudugh, Upper and Lower Juba were pro-Mohamed and voted against the government. In the Banaadir (the district of Mogadishu) and Beledweyne the membership of the League voted in favour of Aden Abdullah Osman and so pro-government.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, the results suggested that Egyptian influence could constitute a challenge to the party stability since in support of the Haji Mohamed Hussein, school and religious teachers were used to promote Egyptian interests.<sup>32</sup> Despite his supposedly neutral position, the Egyptian member of the UN Trusteeship Council in Mogadishu took part in the competition and contributed to this propaganda by distributing pamphlets and public speeches in support of Mohamed's candidature.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Touval, *Somali Nationalism*, p. 91.

<sup>30</sup> Previously, the presidents of the League were chosen by the party Central Committee.

<sup>31</sup> British Consulate-General, Mogadishu, 'Monthly Summary for Period July 9 to August 6, 1957' 6<sup>th</sup> August 1957, no. JG/013/9; TNA, FO 371/125676.

<sup>32</sup> British records stressed on the active role played by the Egyptian government in Somali politics and the use of schools as means of propaganda. One of the monthly political summaries claims as follows: 'There are reports, one from an unimpeachable source, that Egyptian schools in the Mudugh are being used to give para-military training to pupils and songs in Arabic are taught extolling Egypt and denouncing the enemies of the Moslem Somalia. Ibid..

<sup>33</sup> So it was reported by the British Consulate: 'Decisive vote [for the election of Haji Mohamed Hussein] was cast by Mogadishu section of SYL last Sunday and it was influenced in the election by the new Egyptian Consul General who distributed pamphlets unhindered by AFIS, in spite of a ban ... and by meetings held in the Egyptian reading room where threats were uttered by the speaker against

After the re-election of Haji Mohamed Hussein, a political crisis between the League's leadership and the government began. While the president of the League harshly criticised the government in public speeches, the government replied by developing a strategy aimed at isolating Haji Mohamed Hussein and preventing the consolidation of his position. Of the two factions, the government's propaganda was more effective due to a more powerful position, the backing of AFIS and the control and use of the media.<sup>34</sup> The conflict reached a climax in 1958 when the President and Prime Minister of the Assembly presented a motion to the League's General Committee, calling for the expulsion of Haji Mohamed Hussein from the League. The motion claimed that the president's 'violent and provocative attitude' was detrimental to the country. By quoting Haji Mohamed Hussein's public incitement to resort to violence, the motion was approved by the League's General Committee. The following is an extract of the motion published by the local newspaper:

[the president of the League said the words] 'shed your blood for your country'...without considering the consequences that [such words] would cause to the Country at the eve of the independence.<sup>35</sup>

In this way, the League-led government was able to get rid of the main internal political opponent and to regain control over the leadership of the party.

#### 5.2.4 Eradicating clan divisions by using clan division

The 'decentralised despotism' that characterised the governing bodies introduced by AFIS, clan-based at the bottom level and modern at a top level, contrasted with the original aims of Somali nationalism. This tension developed with the introduction of self-government reflecting an uneasy relationship within the dual domain of nationalism. As illustrated in chapter two, in the 1940s a potent movement from

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those who did not vote for Haji Mohamed.' A.C. Kendall, British Consulate-General, Mogadishu, 1<sup>st</sup> August, 1957, n. JG/016/16; TNA, FO 371/125678.

<sup>34</sup> Since his return from Egypt, Haji Mohamed Hussein began a campaign against AFIS whose administrators he called 'colonialist hyenas' and addressed his propaganda to the labourers employed in Italian plantations as at SAIS in Johwar. A.C. Kendall, British Consulate-General, Mogadishu, 18<sup>th</sup> February 1958, no. 5 (1018/58); TNA FO 371/131461.

<sup>35</sup> *Il Corriere della Somalia*, 26<sup>th</sup> May 1958.

below, led by the League, appropriated certain elements of Somali culture in order to (re)imagine a Somali nation with no social division. With the election of the 1956 Legislative Assembly, nationalists came to accept the institutional framework of AFIS domain and by doing so, engaged in conflicts with the national message they originally promoted. Some ideological features of this message, as the League's commitment against clan divisions, became propagandistic ways to consolidate its leadership position within structures of power.

As stated by the new League programme drafted before the 1956 elections, the main aim was the achievement of a united Somali nation in which 'traditional and tribal prejudices' and 'any situation harmful to national interests' had to be eradicated.<sup>36</sup> In practice, it soon became clear that by pursuing the abolition of clan divisions the League instrumentally used clan to crush both internal dissent and the opposition parties. The aim was two-fold: on the one hand, by adopting a centralising and repressive policy, the government's legislation severely targeted the opposition which the League claimed to be 'tribal' and thus adverse to the Somali nation. On the other, the rhetoric of the fight against clan divisions was used to conceal conflicts of different nature as the dissent within the party discussed above and a conflict of interests between the agriculturist communities and the pastoral and urbanised Somalis. As it will be argued, the League used this rhetoric to face both internal dissent fostered by Egyptian influence and to construct the 'tribal' threat constituted by the opposition.

As chapter three discussed, since the formation of political association in the 1940s, Somali sedentary and semi-sedentary communities came to be represented by the political party of the Hizbia Digil & Mirifle named after some of the agriculturist communities living in the relative fertile riverine regions of southern Somalia. Conversely, the Somali Youth League became more popular among the pastoral and urban communities. Nevertheless, political affiliation was not drawn along a clear-cut divide between clans and regions but was subjected to different variables. In this

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<sup>36</sup> The programmes of the political parties were published in the local newspaper. *Il Corriere della Somalia*, 17<sup>th</sup> February 1956.

way, agriculturist communities were also likely to support the League and pastoral Somalis to be the members of the HDM.<sup>37</sup>

Socioeconomic features, such as the control over the agricultural sector, thus played a remarkable role in determining political affiliation or at least they did at the top-level. These interests were reflected in the struggle between the League and the HDM. By favouring a centralising policy, the League enhanced the formation of a firm state control of economic sectors mainly of the agriculture. Differently, the HDM supported the formation of a federal state with more regional autonomy in order to safeguard the interests of the communities it represented.<sup>38</sup> The two political lines clashed in 1952 when the Territorial Council attempted to draft a land law: the League strongly advocated the eradication of clan claims over land ownership; the HDM, instead, insisted that client-status claims and property rights determined by clan affiliation should be officially recognised by the Somali state.<sup>39</sup> This demand was dismissed by the Somali Constitution drafted in 1959 that did not recognise such claims. Future legislation ratified by Somali government, in particular under Siad

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<sup>37</sup> Biographic information collected by the BMA in the 1940s and by the British Consulate in the 1950s provide some insights on clan belonging of key political leaders. Throughout this period, many political leaders and key figures swapped political parties. In fact, members of the same family could have different political membership. For instance, Mohamed Ahmed, Imam of the Abgal sub-clan supported the 'pro-Italia' until 1948 when he joined the League; Abdurrahman Ali Essa, leader among the Boras, was member of the League and became supportive of the Italians in the late 1940s. Two cousins of the Mijertain ruling family, Haji Mussa Boghor and Mussa Boghor Yusuf held different political stances: the former was a well-known member of the League (becoming minister in 1956); the latter authored a petition to the UN asking for Italian trusteeship to be implemented in the late 1940s. Similarly, Aden Shireh Jama, of Darod clan family changed political affiliation: he served in the Italian Army and fought with the Italian resistance movement against the BMA; he was member of the 'pro-Italia' until mid-1950s when he joined the League in 1956. Abdi Nur Mohamed Hussein, of Qabawein, was the local secretary of the League at Bur Hakaba until 1950 when he swapped to the HDM from which party he was expelled in 1956 and re-joined the League in 1958. Abulqadir Mohamed Aden, nicknamed 'Zoppo', of the Rahawein, was member and petition writer of the League until 1950 when he joined the HDM; as it will be discussed in this chapter, he eventually re-joined the League in the late 1950s. This information is taken from two reports drafted in 1948 and 1958 and stored in the same file: Political Adviser (name unknown), 'Personalities in Somalia', BMA, Asmara, 7<sup>th</sup> December, 1948, no. 10 S/PA/36/40; A. C. Kendall, British Consulate-General, Mogadishu, 13<sup>th</sup> November, 1958, Despatch no. 28 (1011/58); 'Leading Personalities in Somalia' TNA, FO 371/131458.

<sup>38</sup> The two aims were stated in the manifesto of the two parties. Author unknown, 'Political Parties in Somalia', undated. ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 9, busta 2.

<sup>39</sup> Marco Guadagni, *Xeerka Beeraha. Diritto Fondiario Somalo. Le terre Agricole dal Regime Coloniale verso la Riforma Socialista*, (Milan: Giuffrè, 1981), p. 220.

Barre's rule, further discarded land ownership claims of sedentary communities through a policy of land alienation.<sup>40</sup>

The policy against sedentary communities originated with the establishment of self-government and was concealed by the fight against clan system. One of the first measures undertaken by the League-led government in its fight against clan system was to ratify a law that forbade the use of clan terminology in the names of political parties. In fact, the law was directed against the opposition party, the Hizbia Digil & Mirifle named after specific clans, which was forced to change its name and became the Somali Independent Constitutional Party, passing from Hizbia Digil & Mirifle to Hizbia Dastur Mustakil Somali (HDMS).<sup>41</sup> At the same time, the Legislative Assembly passed a law that called for the payment of the *shamba* tax, or tax on farming. Although the law technically applied to all the regions, it clearly targeted the southern regions where the farms were located. The enforcement of the new law was met with widespread protests by farmers to which the government replied with force. In the winter of 1956, riots between farmers and police led to fifteen deaths among the former and a few casualties among the latter.<sup>42</sup> Although the farmers' protests were not driven by political leaders, the ruling party was able to use it against the HDMS due to the regional-based character of the opposition.<sup>43</sup>

Another occasion used by the ruling party to crush the opposition was given by the murder of the Egyptian Delegate to the UN Advisory Council, Kamal el din Salah, on 16 April 1957 in Mogadishu. The UN representative was stabbed by a Somali student most likely due to personal reasons.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, a plot was made by the ruling party to implicate the HDMS in the assassination and to accuse it of violent and anti-national conduct: on May 1957 the Legislative Assembly decided to

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<sup>40</sup> See the collection of essays in Besteman, Cassenelli, *The Struggle for land*; especially, Craven, Menkhaus, 'Land Alienation and the Imposition of State Farms'.

<sup>41</sup> Thanks to a smart use of Arabic and Somali languages, the party changed its name from Hizbia Digil Mirifle (Party of the Digil and Mirifle) to Hizbia Dastur Mustakil Somali (Somali Constitutional Independent Party).

<sup>42</sup> British Consulate, Mogadishu, 16<sup>th</sup> January 1957, no. JG/016/2; 'Somalia: Political Situation'; in TNA, FO 371/125678.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid..

<sup>44</sup> Oral memories confirm that. It is also remembered that this student died in prison under unclear circumstances the night before Somalia's independence. Interview with Mohamed Aden Sheikh, 24<sup>th</sup> April 2009, Turin.

lift the parliamentary immunity of two HDMS MPs, the president and vice-president of the party, to allow proceeding to be carried out against them on the charge of complicity with the murder.<sup>45</sup> The accusations were soon dismissed but the League instrumentally used it to blame the HDMS of disseminating hatred and sectarian policies.<sup>46</sup>

The political struggle between the two parties was paralleled by certain turmoil among political supporters. Oral memories collected recall violent clashes between the two different political supporters. For instance on 23 May 1953, an important HDMS leader, Ustad Osman Mohamed Hussein,<sup>47</sup> was stabbed to death by League supporters in Mogadishu.<sup>48</sup> Ustad was a prominent member of the HDMS, he was also a member of the Territorial Council, worked for the Italian administration and his death was strongly felt by HDMS supporters and still vividly remembered today.<sup>49</sup> Further violent clashes are remembered in the city of Baydhabo where the HDMS was the prominent party but also the League had some supporters. It is remembered that in the mid-1950s members of the HDMS set on fire houses of League supporters and raped their wives in Baydhabo.<sup>50</sup> This tension was used by the ruling party to build up a discourse that depicted the opposition as ‘tribal’, factious, because of its regional and clan affiliation and representation.

As the previous section discussed, the dissent within the League over ideological policy led to the expulsion of Haji Mohamed Hussein who formed a new political party. It was on this occasion that a discourse based on clan was first used

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<sup>45</sup> The British Consulate in Mogadishu commented the accusation against the HDM MPs as follows: ‘From the police file and the Public Prosecutor’s report, both of which I have been shown in confidence, it is clear that there is to be an attempt to implicate the Hizbia [i.e. the HDM] itself which is accused of fostering a separatist movement in the south, and to prove that it was ain league with the Ethiopian Liaison Office here, which, the murderer asserts, pay for the assassination. From a precursory glance at the files, there is nothing, apart from the murder’s word, to justify action against anybody but himself. He... was accused of sodomy when at the University in Cairo and whose mental stability was upset by his expulsion.’ British Consulate-General, ‘Monthly Summary for May, 1957’, Mogadishu, 1<sup>st</sup> June 1957; TNA, FO 371/125676.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid..

<sup>47</sup> *Ustad*, meaning professor, was an honorific title used to address individuals who pursued some educational training. Research notes, April 2009, Italy.

<sup>48</sup> *Il Corriere della Somalia*, 26<sup>th</sup> May 1953.

<sup>49</sup> Fieldwork notes. This is also confirmed by oral memories collected by Luling among supporters of the HDMS. Informal conversation with Virginia Luling, June 2008, London.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with Mohamed Aden Sheikh, 24<sup>th</sup> April 2009, Turin.



by Haji Mohamed Hussein to build up his challenge to the ruling party and to call for national unity. Isolated and expelled from the party he had founded, Haji Mohamed Hussein tried in vain to be readmitted in the League and eventually formed a new party called the Great Somalia League (GSL).<sup>51</sup> The new party looked like a revision of the League: it shared a similar political manifesto; it pursued irredentism; it created a logo with religious and nationalist symbols, and it launched a populist motto 'Somalia to Somalis'. Having no access to the government-controlled media, Haji Mohamed Hussein disseminated his propaganda through public speeches. By accusing the League of collusion with the 'colonialists' (i.e. the Italians) and the imperialists (i.e. western powers),<sup>52</sup> he tried to invalidate the League's legitimacy to represent Somalia and the Somali people:

The real League is this GSL. The Somali Youth League is not called League anymore. It is the house of colonialists and Somali imperialists that try to subject Somalia to the Americans; it is the [W]hite [H]ouse of America<sup>53</sup>

In order to consolidate his position, Haji Mohamed Hussein tried to appeal to some factions of the League that were unhappy with the clan representation of the Legislative Assembly. Despite the fact that the League recruited all Somali clans into its membership, the majority was drawn from the Daarood and Hawiya, the biggest Somali family clans. Consequently, the Daarood/Hawiya representation was predominant in the 1956 Legislative Assembly: the Prime Minister Abdhullahi Issa was Hawiya and Aden Abdullah Osman was a Hawiya linked through marriage to an important Daarood family; the ministers of the Assembly also balanced the representative proportion of the two clans.<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, their clan affiliation represented a means through which the government could be challenged. Because it was excluded from power, the opposition represented by Haji Mohamed

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<sup>51</sup> Research findings tend to suggest that initially Haji Mohamed Hussein did not want to found a new party. Conversely, he aimed at elaborating a propaganda which would strengthen his position within the League, so to facilitate his readmission in the party.

<sup>52</sup> During public speeches, Haji Mohamed Hussein made explicit accusations to Ethiopia: 'it is a shame that regions of our Somalia are still under the rule of colonialist oppressors'. Author unknown, 'Summary of Haji Mohamed Hussein's public speech held on 4<sup>th</sup> October 1958 in Mogadishu', undated; ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 9, busta 2.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid..

<sup>54</sup> Castagno, 'Somali Republic', in Coleman, Rosberg (eds.), *Political Parties*, p. 532.

Hussein played the card of clan and tried to catalyse an unsatisfactory section of Daarood members by accusing Aden Abdullah Osman to have favoured the Hawiya in the Assembly.<sup>55</sup>

The way the ruling party replied to the challenge constituted by the Great Somali League is important in understanding the use of a discourse based on clan. The ruling party constructed an ambiguous narrative that by using clan denied clan divisions. The following extracts are taken from the party communiqué issued after the formation of the Great Somali League in which the League's propaganda ambivalently denying clan divisions by pointing out that, in fact, clan favouritisms had been made by the government. First, the communiqué appealed for a united front against clannish divisions:

Brothers, we warn you from the new party [the GSL] which has taken a tribal guise. So far, it has been known as the party of 'Darod' and if that was the case the Somali Youth League would be the party of 'Hawiyah'.

However and despite denying a political discourse based on clan, the League addressed the Darod communities by arguing that a fair distribution of power and resources among clans had actually been pursued:

Brothers, if we want to look at the matter from a tribal point of view, then it would be clear that the tribe of the 'Darod' got the lion's share within the current government. In the finance for instance, it is the only tribe that has the upper hand over the country's economy. For example, which of the six regions of our territory has the best share in the economics? After the opening of trade with Aden [this region is] the Mudugh and Mijertein. The same consideration is valid for the Basso Giuba that has economic relations with Kenya. On the contrary, we know well that the other regions do not benefit from the above mentioned privileges concerning free trade... Considered the great kindness towards the Darod-inhabited regions, what else do we want from the Government? Isn't the same Government, who has been accused of tribal politics, making sacrifice and justice?

Moreover, by calling for unity the party propaganda stigmatised the clans represented by the opposition and shifted the attention on the threat they represented to the party:

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<sup>55</sup> Touval, *Somali Nationalism*, p. 89.

Ask yourselves what benefits we will get by dividing into tribes and splitting into parties! Aren't we aware of the fact that the 'Dighil and Mirifle' and their miserable party will take advantage of the situation and secure the majority of votes? Would this turn to our advantage?<sup>56</sup>

By 1956 due to a certain dissent fostered by external players, a sense of instability characterised the political arena. Within this context, a discourse based on clan became the way in which the League's leadership curbed the opposition and concealed the conflicts that had arisen around the distribution of resources. In doing so, the ruling party propaganda used the card of clan to overcome the internal conflict within the party. By constructing the threat represented by the opposition, this discourse stigmatised the communities it represented and also shifted the attention on different kinds of conflict. In fact, silencing the opposition became the main goal of the first Legislative Assembly. A similar strategy, i.e. constructing an external threat not to face internal crisis, will be adopted in the process of unification of Somalia and Somaliland discussed in the next chapter.

### 5.2.5 The new electoral law

The decolonising plan established by AFIS placed great emphasis on the electoral process which was considered a key part within the programme of institutional transplantation and devolution of power.<sup>57</sup> Four elections, two municipal and two national, were scheduled within 5 years. The Italian administration planned and supervised the 1954 municipal and 1956 national elections. With the establishment of self-government through the formation of the Legislative Assembly in 1956, the electoral responsibility was passed to the Somali government which was in charge of the 1958 municipal and the 1959 national elections. However and in addition to the this responsibility, the Assembly inherited an electoral system that had been susceptible to a series of deficiencies and that generated electoral tampering and

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<sup>56</sup> Communiqué issued by the Somali Youth League, Central Committee 'An Invite, Advice and Warning to the sensible people', 13<sup>th</sup> August 1958, Mogadishu; ASDMAE; carteggio AFIS, cassa 9, busta 2.

<sup>57</sup> Morone, *L'Ultima Colonia*, p. 154.

unsatisfactory results, as discussed in chapter five. For this reason, the UN prescribed that in order to overcome the electoral deficiencies, the Somali government had to draft a new electoral law. Moreover, considering that the distribution of parliamentary seats was based on regional population, the UN recommended that the drafting of the new law should be accompanied by a census of the electorate.<sup>58</sup> The newly-formed Somali government was pressured by both issues related to the electoral process and running a census of electorate within a rather tight schedule. As this section explores, the emphasis placed on the electoral process had the unforeseen consequence of fostering political competition rather than enhancing democratisation.

The 1958 municipal elections represented an important test of governmental management for the Legislative Assembly. Although a census of the electorate was carried out in the municipalities by AFIS in 1953, in provision of the 1958 elections the suffrage was expanded in order to allow women to vote.<sup>59</sup> Despite the importance of the expansion of the suffrage to the process of democratisation, an update of the electoral rolls was not completed in time. Thus, in order to enable the unregistered electors to cast ballots in their municipalities, the Assembly decided to rely on the ink-voting system.<sup>60</sup> The result was that, similarly to previous electoral experiments, the 1958 elections generated unsatisfactory data and continued to foster a sense of mistrust on the electoral system as a whole. As shown in Table 5.2, the electoral results were paralleled by an uneven distribution of seats among the municipalities between the two main parties.

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<sup>58</sup> Renzo Meregazzi, *L'Amministrazione Fiduciaria Italiana della Somalia (A.F.I.S.)*, (Milan: Giuffrè, 1954), chapter 3, especially pp. 15-25.

<sup>59</sup> Castagno, 'Somalia', p. 357.

<sup>60</sup> The results of the 1958 Municipal Elections were commented by the British Consulate as follows: 'The elections passed without incident. The S.Y.L. claimed a "resounding success", to have won 418 out of 667 seats. In fact, this victory was due to the imposed "gains" of the S.Y.L. candidates in the northern provinces, where opposition was not admitted, in all 237 out of 251 seats. In the southern provinces, where the elections were hotly contested, the S.Y.L. lost considerable ground, mostly to the Independent Somali Constitutional Party (H.D.M.S.) which obtained 175 seats against 57 won in the 1954 municipal elections'. A.C. Kendall, British Consulate General, Mogadishu, 4th April, 1959, no. JG/011/2; 'Somalia: Annual Report for 1958', TNA, FO 371/138306.

	<b>1954 Municipal Election</b>		<b>1958 Municipal Election</b>	
<b>Party</b>	<b>Votes</b>	<b>Seats</b>	<b>Votes</b>	<b>Seats</b>
SYL	17,982	141	39,178	416
HDM (HDMS)	8,198	57	38,214	175
UGB	2,273	5	6,322	6
GSL	--	--	10,125	36
Liberal Party	--	--	11,004	27
GFS	--	--	341	3
SDP	--	--	--	--
Union Merehan	--	--	--	--
GAA	--	--	--	--
UGSH	--	--	--	--
Scidle	954	8	--	--
Bagiuni	--	--	--	--
PDA	--	--	--	--
UAS	2,584	28	--	--
LPS	1,681	22	--	--
UNS	1,137	9	--	--
Palma	415	3	--	--
UPS	1,759	4	--	--
AGA	351	--	--	--
Ancora	125	1	--	--
Muosada	124	--	--	--
Leopardo	24	--	--	--
Abgalia	47	3	--	--
UDS	43	--	--	--
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>37,697</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>105,184</b>	<b>663</b>

**Table 5.2:** Municipal electoral results. Compiled from: Castagno, 'Somalia', p. 358.

The discussion of the new electoral law began in 1958 a few months before the national elections. As discussed in this section, despite repeated complaints from the opposition parties, the Legislative Assembly ratified an electoral law which would secure the re-election of the League and prevent a fair representation of the political activities in Somalia. Additionally, instead of addressing the issue of quantifying the electorate, the Legislative Assembly gave attention to the practicalities of the voting system. Moreover, the law introduced restrictive criteria for the presentation of lists. These restrictions represented huge limitations for small parties in the electoral competition and these criteria were clearly design to favour the Somali Youth League in the electoral competition.

One of the new conditions introduced by the new law was the increase of the number of the elected parliamentary seats from 60 to 90, and the introduction of restrictions to the presentation of electoral lists. According to the previous law, in order to run in a certain constituency, each party had to present 60 nominees. The new bill raised the number to 90 nominees for each constituency. Furthermore, the bill prescribed that the lists had to be supported in each constituency by 5,000 signatures and by the payment of 90,000 Somali shillings as a deposit.<sup>61</sup> These requirements constituted adverse circumstances for the smaller political parties that in 1956 struggled to present lists in all the constituencies and went unrepresented in most. Additionally, the new bill prescribed that each nominee had to be knowledgeable (reading and writing skills) in both Arabic and Italian,<sup>62</sup> conditions that could hardly be met in a country with a very low percentage of literate people. As recorded by AFIS, the distribution of seats once more followed the ‘few, imprecise and uncompleted statistics available’.<sup>63</sup>

As soon as the Assembly began to debate on the new law, the position of the main opposition party, the Hisbiya Dastur Mustakil Somali, clashed with the line of

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<sup>61</sup> The Administrator’s Cabinet, Memorandum, 14<sup>th</sup> March 1959, Mogadishu. ASDMAE; carteggio AFIS, cassa 9, busta 4.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid..

<sup>63</sup> Ibid..

the Somali Youth League. Due to the controversial electoral procedures and an unfair system of seats distribution, the HDMS stressed that the new law should elaborate a system to ensure fair elections and party representation. Instead of addressing these key questions, the HDMS maintained that the discussions led by the ruling party focused on issues of secondary importance such as the actual practicalities of the voting system. The following extracts are taken from the minutes of these parliamentary discussions. The main concern of the opposition, completely dismissed by the majority, was that the new electoral law did not address the faults of the previous system. As pointed out by the leader of the HDMS, Aabdulqadir Mohamed Aden:

As we all know, the law was not respected during the administrative [i.e. municipal] elections. For this reason, we believe that the situation should remain as it is in Somalia until we will come out with another solution.<sup>64</sup>

In particular, the opposition stressed the need to introduce a system of checks and balances, arguing that the ink-voting and representation system in use for the 1958 administrative elections did not prevent a person from voting more than once. Examples of the deficiencies of the previous electoral system were mentioned during the discussion:

[T]he things we saw in Alto Giuba specifically in Baidoa [i.e. Baydhabo], Bur Acaba [i.e. Burhakaba] and Dinsor proves that this law does not mean anything and is not respected. We saw people who voted by dipping their thumbs in the indelible ink, and re-voted again. When we reported the matter to the political executive authority, they told us that anyone who comes before the polling station can vote.<sup>65</sup>

Issues related to electoral tampering were of particular concern to the HDMS since some irregularities were reported in the constituencies where the party had previously won by a remarkable majority. In particular, in the constituency of Burhakaba where, as illustrated in Table 5.1, 50,000 votes were cast in favour of the HDMS, a third of the total number of votes won by the party in the 1956 national

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<sup>64</sup> Author unknown, 'Minutes of the Meeting no. 33 of the Legislative Assembly', 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1958, Mogadishu; ASDMAE; carteggio AFIS, cassa 9, busta 4.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid..

election. By allowing and favouring the electoral tampering, the government was accused by the opposition of 'getting the majority in the Alto Giuba... the stronghold of Hizbia.' The government rejected the accusations, arguing that a system of checks and balances was already in place. So the president of the Assembly Aden Abdullah Osman:

There are several ways to rectify the past mistakes or to make complains against the irregularities that occurred in the administrative elections. The law establishes that we have to do so by turning to the Regional Judge.<sup>66</sup>

But as stressed by Abdulqadir Mohamed Aden, these procedures failed to function correctly:

What if the very same Regional Judge is present there and when they showed him the proof [and told him]:- 'Look this lady has voted because she has an ink mark on her finger', and the judge says 'she can vote', then what do we do?<sup>67</sup>

Nevertheless, the complaints were finally dismissed by the president of the Assembly for being inappropriate:

This is not the right place [to discuss the issue]<sup>68</sup>

Facing the government refusal to discuss issues related to the electoral system, the Hisbiya Dastur Mustakil Somali, which drew its main supporters in the agriculturist southern regions, felt its needs neglected by the Legislative Assembly and perceived the new law as limiting its activities. On 6 November 1958, hoping to induce the government to discuss the issues, the MPs of the HDMS left the Legislative Assembly. The main accusation of the HDMS was that by the drafting of the new law, the government was in fact aiming at securing the majority and at curbing the opposition:

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<sup>66</sup> Author unknown, 'Minutes of the Meeting no. 33 of the Legislative Assembly', 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1958, Mogadishu; ASDMAE; carteggio AFIS, cassa 9, busta 4.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid..

<sup>68</sup> Ibid..



The aim [of the new law] is to secure the majority of votes. If that is the only thing we are talking about, at the moment the majority is detained by one party therefore the laws made by this Assembly are worthless.<sup>69</sup>

However and despite the numerous protests and complaints from the opposition, the government decided to continue the parliamentary discussions. On November 22, the new electoral law was passed leaving the opposition out from the discussions.

### 5.3 The 1959 Electoral Campaign and the election of the New Assembly

National elections were conducted for the second time in February 1959. A new Legislative Assembly of 90 seats was formed with the aim to lead the country to independence.<sup>70</sup> Despite the crucial moment for Somali history, the 1959 elections were almost universally boycotted by the opposition. As a result, the League was able to secure an overwhelming majority of 83 seats out of 90 in the new Assembly. In this way, the League became the main party of *Somalia Italiana* and, given its strong parliamentary majority, of the Somali Republic as well.

This section illustrates the different stages of the process of consolidation of ‘*Monocolore*’ state. Similar to the evolution of the one-party state in West Africa,<sup>71</sup> this process was characterised by a phase in which the majority party relied on both repression and negotiations with the opposition to consolidate its power. By looking at the features of the electoral campaign, this section investigates the reasons why the opposition boycotted the 1959 elections. The findings suggest that a series of circumstances contributed to create an electoral context in which the League remained unchallenged. From one point of view, the restrictive requirements dictated by the new electoral law constituted serious limitations for opposition parties to take

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<sup>69</sup> Author unknown, ‘Minutes of the Meeting no. 33 of the Legislative Assembly’, 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1958, Mogadishu; ASDMAE; carteggio AFIS, cassa 9, busta 4.

<sup>70</sup> In 1960, 30 elected MPs from British Somaliland joined the 90 deputies of *Somalia Italiana* by forming a united Somali parliament of 120 seats. The process of unification of Somalia and Somaliland is the object of study of the next chapter.

<sup>71</sup> Zolberg, *Creating Political Order*, pp. 77-92.

part in the elections. Additionally, a more openly repressive strategy was adopted by the ruling party against those opposition members and supporters that organised public protests. As we shall see, the key power positions as well as the degree of autonomy that the decolonisation plan gave to the self-government had the unforeseen consequences of hindering the consolidation of democratic institutions rather than favouring their developments. The League not only abused the government's power and resources but also limited the development of the opposition's campaign. Furthermore, the complicity of AFIS, which denied and ignored the accusations of abuse of power, was crucial for the League to consolidate its position.

Additionally, during the campaign a centralising trend was reported according to which local branches of the opposition, under some pressure from the ruling party, merged into the League. This trend marked the beginning of negotiating strategy adopted by the League to engage directly with opposition leaders. Due to importance given to election and electoral backing, the League's strategy to amass majority of votes relied on repression and at the same time, made use of its exclusive position to negotiate share of institutional posts with opposition leaders which eventually joined the majority. A similar strategy was adopted by League's leadership when dealing with the process of unification, as next chapter discusses.

### **5.3.1 The electoral campaign**

As soon as the electoral cycle began in January 1959, it became clear that the requirements dictated by the new electoral law were highly competitive and could hardly be met by the opposition parties. For instance, in order to present lists of 90 nominees in each constituency, illiterate nominees were often included in the lists that were, as a consequence, rejected. In particular, the relatively small parties struggled to meet these requirements such as the GLS whose lists were rejected in Afmadoow and Bardheere.<sup>72</sup> A 3-day extension for the presentation of the lists was

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<sup>72</sup> Author unknown, '1959 Election. Internal Telegrams' (undated); ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 9, busta 4.

passed by the government but it did not give enough time for the opposition to form valid lists. On the contrary, the extension became even more detrimental to the opposition because, at a second examination, some of the lists accepted in a first instance were rejected as the HDMS list in Baydhabo.<sup>73</sup> In this way, the Somali Youth League was the only party who managed to meet the deadline and was able to present valid list of nominees in every constituency while the opposition parties remained mostly unrepresented. Due to the difficulties in presenting valid lists, electoral competition took place in 8 constituencies out of 30. In the remaining 22 constituencies, the lists of the League were the only ones to be presented; in this way, the seats were assigned to the ruling party by default.

The struggle to present valid lists of nominees was linked with a singular trend reported during the campaign. A series of telegrams sent from local AFIS authorities to the Italian administration in Mogadishu reported that, just before the elections, a few local branches of the opposition parties merged into the League. This trend was especially prevalent in those constituencies where the main opposition party, the HDMS, did relatively well in the 1956 elections or where in January 1959 the HDMS lists were rejected. For instance, unexpected events were registered in the constituency of Baydhabo where the HDMS was considered to be the main political organisation gaining a strong majority in the 1956 elections. In January 1959, the electoral list presented by the party was rejected because it did not meet the requirements dictated by the new law.<sup>74</sup> Facing the possibility of being excluded from the competition, the local HDMS secretary decided to join the League. Similar cases were reported in the constituencies of Jilib, Beledweyne, Bulobarde, Kismaayo and Xuddur where the local branches of the HDMS merged into the League just before the elections.<sup>75</sup>

This tendency was also reported by *Il Corriere della Somalia* that devoted a great deal of attention to the elections and electoral campaign. In January 1959, the

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<sup>73</sup> A further demand for another extension was denied. Ibid..

<sup>74</sup> According to AFIS, the list of the HDMS was not supported by the minimum of 5,000 signatures required by the new law. Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> As a result, the HDMS did not present any list where it had considerable support as in Baydhabo, Marka and Jilib. Ibid..

*Corriere* published a series of articles to acknowledge that branches of the opposition merged with the League. The following is an extract of an article reporting the HDMS branch of the in Baydhabo merging with the League in which the local secretary explains the change in political affiliation as follows:

[C]onsidering that the Constitutional Party [i.e. the HDMS] pursues tribal aims and personal interests and causes division in Somalia, we spontaneously believe that the Somali Youth League is the only national party in Somalia and we have thus decided to join it.<sup>76</sup>

This piece was published on 8 January 1959 only few days after the HDMS list had been rejected in Baydhabo. The article was coupled by similar statements attributed to the opposition leaders as the announcement of the fusion between the HDMS and the League in Dinsor, which was the only constituency where the League did not manage to present any electoral list in the 1956 election;<sup>77</sup> or the statement of the HDMS Local Committee in Baraawe to announce the dissolution of the local branch and the margining into the League.<sup>78</sup>

It is possible to speculate that in order to win the electoral majority in all the constituencies, the League developed a strategy which sought to negotiate key posts with the opposition leaders. In return, the latter were expected to join the majority. Given the competitive electoral context and the rejection of several lists of the opposition, certain local leaders decided to join the League. Additionally during the electoral campaign, the ruling party exercised some pressure on the opposition leaders. In fact, some reported to AFIS that the ruling party relied on the police to induce their local branches to close down or to merge with the League especially where valid lists were presented.<sup>79</sup>

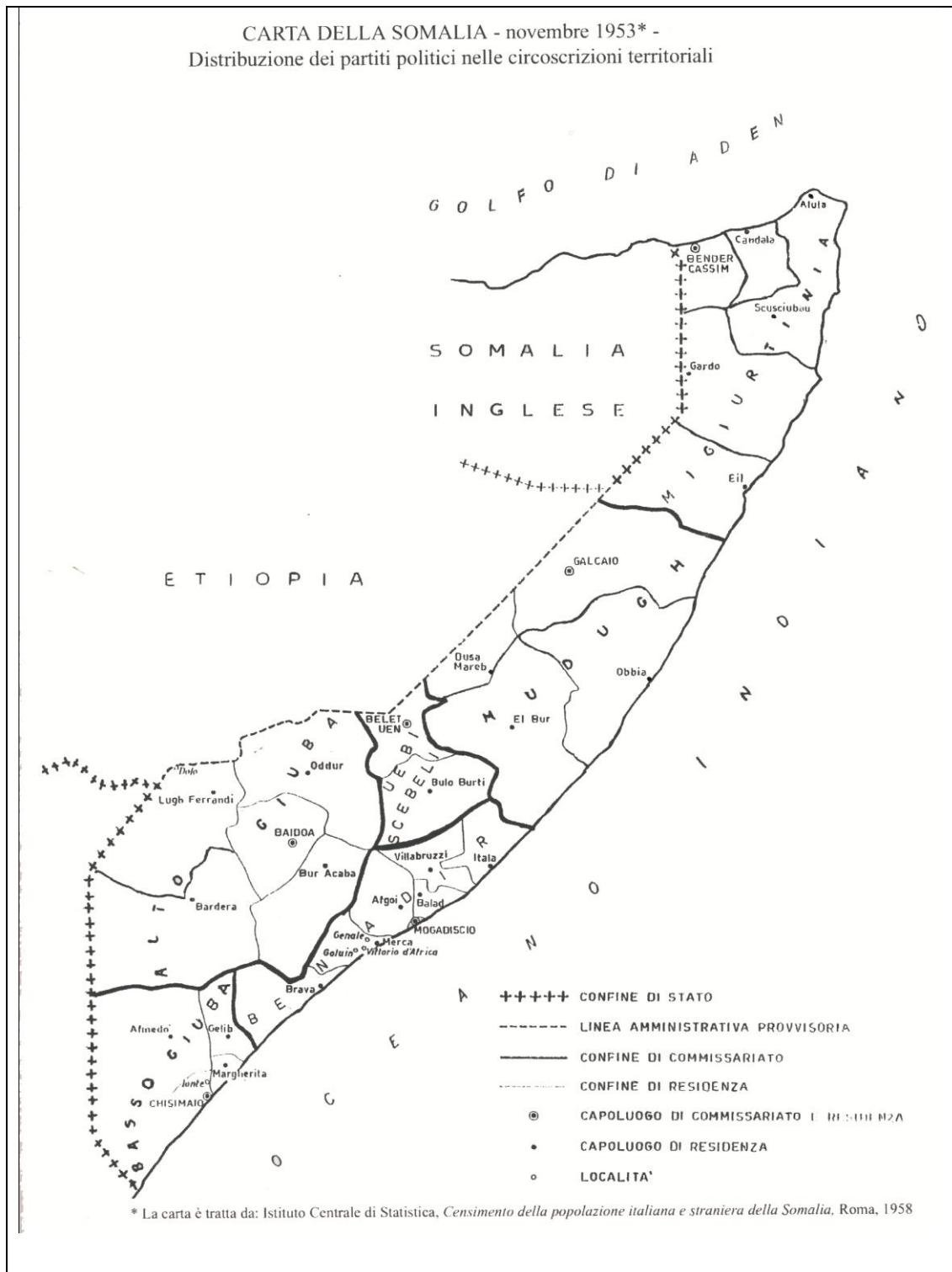
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<sup>76</sup> The article attributed the statement to the HDMS secretary in Baydhabo. *Il Corriere della Somalia*, 8<sup>th</sup> January 1959.

<sup>77</sup> *Il Corriere della Somalia*, 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1959.

<sup>78</sup> *Il Corriere della Somalia*, 9<sup>th</sup> January 1959.

<sup>79</sup> As for instance in Afmadoow and Bardheere. Author unknown, '1959 Election. Internal Telegrams' (undated); ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 9, busta 4.



**Map 5.3:** The Electoral Constituencies. Compiled from Annalisa Urbano, *La Lega dei Giovani Somali e L'Amministrazione Fiduciaria Italiana (1948-60)*, (Università di Bologna, Tesi di Laurea, unpublished, 2005), p. 144.

The government's use of the police force to supervise the electoral campaign came to constitute a noticeable feature of the 1959 election. In compliance with the programme of decolonisation, the 1956 Somali government had to manage the replacement of Italians by Somalis, in this way the 'Somalisation' of the police, i.e. the appointment of trained Somalis to replace Italian officials, was completed in May 1956.<sup>80</sup> Additionally, the Legislative Assembly passed some special laws that ensured the government's control over the police: a range of functions to undertake on behalf of the ruling party were given to the police such as the arrest of political opponents for 'security reason'. As discussed in chapter four, already in the late 1940s there was a close relationship between the ruling party and the police, the League became very popular among the Somali Gendarmerie to the point that 70% of policemen stationed in Mogadishu were believed to be members of the party. Following the election of the first Legislative Assembly, this relationship became closer.

The League-led government largely relied on this relationship during the electoral campaign especially in the event of demonstrations organised by the opposition. For instance, on 24 and 25 February 1959 hundreds of GSL supporters took their protest to the streets in Mogadishu. The demonstration against the government was repressed by the police and culminated in violent riots in Mogadishu: the District Commissioner in Mogadishu, Ahmed Haji Afrah, was wounded during the protests; 280 GSL supporters were arrested, almost half of which women; hundreds were wounded and two eventually died as a result.<sup>81</sup> Soon after, the government imposed a curfew in Mogadishu and police check points were organised throughout the city.<sup>82</sup> A further attack on the GSL was made by the newspaper *Il Corriere* that published a leading article with the title 'Anti-patriotic

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<sup>80</sup> *Il Corriere della Somalia*, 17<sup>th</sup> May 1956.

<sup>81</sup> *Il Corriere della Somalia*, 27<sup>th</sup> February 1959. Among the supporters arrested there were the leader of the Great Somali League, Haji Mohamed Hussein and 112 women. Del Boca, *Nostalgie delle colonie*, p. 278.

<sup>82</sup> *Il Corriere della Somalia*, 28<sup>th</sup> February 1959.

terrorists' and accused 'the activists and leadership of the subversive parties' of 'fostering racist hatred and enhancing tribal resentments.'<sup>83</sup>

Oral memories collected for this research among relatives of the GSL chairman, Haji Mohamed Hussein, also confirm the League's action against the opposition. The Somali leader and his party were highly pressured by the government and his private habitation was searched by police on several occasions.<sup>84</sup> Working in collusion with the police, the government's repressive strategy constituted a serious obstacle to the opposition's campaign. In particular, it affected the GLS such that just before the elections it was made 'politically inefficient'.<sup>85</sup> Specifically, by the use of political pressure and coercive methods, the League forced local branches of the opposition to close down and its members to join the League.

During the electoral campaign, the opposition lodged a series of complaints against the government to the Italian Administration. However since the formation of the Legislative Assembly, AFIS had assumed an aloof attitude regarding Somali politics and ignored the complaints by delegating all responsibilities to the government. For example, in January 1959, as soon as the electoral cycle began, a group representing the opposition party went before the Italian Administrator to report irregularities in the electoral campaign. In addition to the League's incriminating campaign violations, the opposition accused the government of creating unfair conditions for other parties by abusing its power. As the chairmen of the HDMS, Abdulqadir Mohamed Aden and of the Liberal Party, Haji Mohamed Boracco reported to the Administrator:

Abdulqadir Mohamed Aden: I went to Assai-Dolo [i.e. Dooloow] where there were 10 Land Rover and 6 [FIAT] Millecento used by the district commissioners to go to the wells drilled by AFIS; there they [members of the League] asked who supported the League in Assai-Dolo, three people raised their hands and in this way they were given water. This is political immaturity... [there was] a column of cars.

H.L. the Administrator: I beg your pardon. Let the League do its own politics.

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<sup>83</sup> *Il Corriere della Somalia*, 28<sup>th</sup> February 1959.

<sup>84</sup> Interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2009.

<sup>85</sup> The Administrator's Cabinet, *Riservatissimo*, 5<sup>th</sup> March 1959, Mogadishu; ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 9, busta 4.

Abdulqadir Mohamed Aden: The cars belong to the Government. They are new and the number plates say 'IN PROVA' [temporary registration plate].

Haji Mohamed Boracco: Several cars are now in circulation even in Itala [i.e. Cadaley], where no one has ever seen a car before.<sup>86</sup>

Although frustrated by the violations, the opposition hoped that the AFIS would intervene and request the establishment of a UN Committee to supervise the elections. On a second meeting with the Italian Administrator, the opposition representatives announced their withdrawal from the electoral competition.<sup>87</sup> The reasons were the following:

[L]ack of freedom of speech and political expression; our sections have disappeared completely. The secretaries of our local sections are forced to sign documents [to authorise the closing down of the sections] otherwise they are put in prison.<sup>88</sup>

Despite the decision to boycott the election, the opposition in fact aimed at pushing AFIS to act: 'today, Somalia', the opposition representatives said to the Administrator before leaving his office, 'is in your hands'.<sup>89</sup>

Within this increasingly restrictive political and legislative environment, the Somali opposition sought for support from an international audience. The links between sections of Somali society and Egyptian support and funding have already been mentioned,<sup>90</sup> further support was constituted by the Italian Communist Party (PCI). As mentioned in chapter two, in the 1940s the PCI set up links with some

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<sup>86</sup> Author unknown, 'Minutes of the Meeting between the Italian Administrator and Abdulkadir Mohamed Aden, Secretary-General of the Somali Independent Constitutional Party (H.D.M.S.)', undated; ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 9, busta 4.

<sup>87</sup> The representatives of the opposition parties were constituted by the president of HDMS, the vice president of the Great Somali League, the president of the Somali National Union, and the president of Liberal Party Young Somalis. Author unknown, 'Minutes of the Meeting between the Administrator and the Opposition Parties', 9<sup>th</sup> January 1959, Mogadishu; ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 9, busta 4.

<sup>88</sup> The decision was confirmed by the officer in charge of the Somali Police, Mohamed Abscir, who reported: 'on 8<sup>th</sup> January all the local sections of the opposition parties have been instructed not to present electoral lists or to withdraw them.' Mohamed Abscir, Internal Telegram, 12<sup>nd</sup> January 1959, Mogadishu; ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 9, busta 4.

<sup>89</sup> Author unknown, 'Minutes of the Meeting between the Administrator and the Opposition Parties', 9<sup>th</sup> January 1959, Mogadishu; ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 9, busta 4.

<sup>90</sup> The Egyptian member of the Advisory Council in Mogadishu sent a report to the UN in which he demanded the ratification of new elections in *Somalia Italiana*. Del Boca, *Nostalgie delle colonie*, p. 278.



members of the Somali Youth League. Being the main opposition party in Italy, in the 1950s the PCI challenged the AFIS administration within the Italian government and through Italian media. In December 1958, the Italian communist newspaper, *Paese Sera*, published an article reporting an interview with Haji Mohamed Hussein chairman of the GSL. The piece explicitly accused both the Somali Government and AFIS of working in complicity with one another to silence and suppress the opposition by passing special bills.<sup>91</sup> At the same time, two MPs of the PCI presented a petition to the Italian government in which the administration in Somalia was criticised harshly.<sup>92</sup> Their extremely detailed petition clearly indicated a link between the Italian and Somali oppositions and required AFIS to respond officially to the accusations.<sup>93</sup>

### 5.3.2 Somali political state of affairs: official and unofficial versions of the story

AFIS documents produced in response to the PCI petition show how the Italian authority was able to hide the state of political affairs in Somalia. On the one hand, AFIS presented an official summary for the Italian government listing enthusiastically the progress of the Legislative Assembly in Somalia and firmly denying any accusations. On the other, the internal documents that circulated among AFIS tell a different story that confirmed the accusations from the opposition and predicted a gloomy future for Somalia. The official summary was presented to the UN while the other documents were discarded.

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<sup>91</sup> Giorgio Assan, 'In Somalia Leggi Eccezionali per Soffocare l'Opposizione', *Paese Sera*, 17<sup>th</sup> December 1958.

<sup>92</sup> The MPs of the PCI were Pajetta and Boldrini.

<sup>93</sup> The petition went as follows: "It is clear that by violating the law the Somali governemnt favours the presentation of candidates from its own party or fake representative of the opposition. By doing so, it makes use of a still imperfect law which is against the trusteeship agreement and the commitment AFIS took before the UN. The petitioners wonder what measures have been adopted to rectify this abnormal situation [which is characterised by] arrests and political persecutions whose responsibility lies with the Italian Government and its representative in Somalia. [If the situation remains like this] there will be the need to postpone the elections whose validity is already compromised.' 'Petition presented by the MPs Pajetta and Boldrini to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs', 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1959, Rome; ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 9, busta 4.

The official report on the political development in *Somalia Italiana* expressed confidence in the Somali Government whose conduct allowed a ‘completely free and legal environment’ for carrying out the electoral campaign and elections.<sup>94</sup> Furthermore, the report pointed out the progress achieved by the Legislative Assembly since the establishment of self-government. Among these achievements, the report indicated the drafting of a new electoral law in concordance with the UN recommendations. The electoral law was, according to the Italian report, the product of a joint effort of the majority and opposition:

The Government presented the law to the Legislative Assembly promptly. A parliamentary commission which included members of the opposition, widely examined the law... Subsequently, it [the law] was discussed during numerous sessions of the Legislative Assembly and eventually passed by the majority. In that occasion [when the law was passed] the leader of the opposition congratulated with the Government for the law.<sup>95</sup>

Furthermore, the report directly confronted the accusations against AFIS by pointing out that, with the establishment of self-government, Italy was no longer responsible for the development of Somali domestic issues.<sup>96</sup> It was reported that even in case of legislative and administrative irregularities, AFIS had no power to interfere with the Somali government. In other words, the report denied the accusations but also declined the responsibilities. For example, according to the report ‘no arbitrary arrest took place’:

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<sup>94</sup> ‘Petition presented by the MPs Pajetta and Boldrini to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs’, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1959, Rome; ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 9, busta 4.

<sup>95</sup> In fact, the Italian report highlighted the liberal attitude adopted by the Somali-led government as opposed to the opponents’ challenging stance: on the one hand, the report praised the government for having ratified a 3-day extension for the presentation of the lists; on the other, it considered highly ‘negative’ the attitude of the opposition, namely of the Great Somali League and the Liberal Party. The Administrator’s Cabinet, Telexpress to the Italian Government in Rome, 5<sup>th</sup> March 1959, Mogadishu, no. 90/10713; ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 9, busta 4.

<sup>96</sup> Although the Italian Administration agreed in requesting a UN Committee to supervise the elections, the Committee was never requested by AFIS: ‘As far as the request of UN electoral observers is concerned, the Administrator declares to be in favour, however, to be specific, it is clearly up to the parties’ leaders to make a formal request’. Author unknown, ‘Summary of the Meeting between the Parties’ Representatives and the Administrator’, 6<sup>th</sup> December 1958, Mogadishu. ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 9, busta 4.

Needless to say, the necessary police measures were adopted by Somali competent authority, in compliance with their exclusive responsibility of self-government.<sup>97</sup>

Conversely, the unofficial version of the story gave a gloomier picture of Somali politics. First of all, the Italian Administration was very sceptical about the new electoral law, the ways the elections were carried out and, more generally, the electoral results.

The electoral law was conceived badly and developed even worse. After vain attempts to extend the term of the first Assembly, it was approved in hurry, with no census [of population]... the UN believed [that a census of the electorate was] absolutely necessary considering the highly criticised use of indirect system based on 'shir' and the distribution of seats before the elections according to the few, inaccurate, incomplete statistics available.<sup>98</sup>

Second, AFIS confirmed that the electoral campaign and elections were marked by fraud and abuses of power by the Somali Youth League. In that, the League worked in complicity with the government:

In fact, the electoral campaign has been characterised by plots and pressures especially in the peripheral districts where the candidates of majority [i.e. the League] tried at all costs to secure the seat or seats in their favour. That happened due to a certain tolerance of the government [that was] not strong enough to prevent local frauds but actually [it was] interested to let its trusted men be elected.<sup>99</sup>

Although the fraud and electoral tampering were not considered as such 'to necessitate the call for new elections, as requested by the opposition', AFIS considered the electoral result 'not satisfactory at all'. For these reasons, the Legislative Assembly elected in March 1959 did not represent 'the state of political

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<sup>97</sup> Author unknown, 'Summary of the Meeting between the Parties' Representatives and the Administrator', 6<sup>th</sup> December 1958, Mogadishu. ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 9, busta 4.

<sup>98</sup> The Administrator's Cabinet, Telexpress to the Italian Government in Rome', 14<sup>th</sup> April 1959, Mogadishu, n. 2051; ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 9, busta 4. As discussed in chapter four, the *shir* were considered customary assemblies given elective power in the 1956 national election.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid..

parties in the Territory.’<sup>100</sup> In April 1959, the Italian Administrator summaries the political development as follows:

Due to the wear and tear of ruling, the majority is in crisis [*sic!*]. There have been several significant displays [of the crisis]. For instance in 1957, the election of the well-known Hagi Mohamed Hussein as chairman of the S.Y.L. was the result of plots inside the League and contrasts with the government. Afterwards, at the [League] congress in December 1957, the Minister of the Interior, Hagi Mussa Bogor, resigned although his resignations were rejected. Later, the League congress to work on the electoral law and campaign was about to bring the party to dissolution, especially after the expulsion and destitution of Hagi Mohamed. [The party did not dissolve] thanks to the timely and strong measures taken by Aden Abdulla. A further and more serious crisis unfolded in December 1958 at the eve of the national elections. Luckily enough for the sake of public order during the elections- the crisis was overcome or, at least, postponed. Today it [the crisis] stands again fully at the eve of the formation of the new Assembly and Government.<sup>101</sup>

## 5.4 Assessing the impacts of self-government

*The replacement of Italians by Somalis has proved to be no solution for the many problems facing the country.*

British Consulate-General, Mogadishu, 10<sup>th</sup> July 1957<sup>102</sup>

In assessing the effects of the introduction of self-government on Somali politics, this section discusses its positive and negative aspects. Scholarly studies of political parties underscored a general tendency to the consolidation of one-party system in Sub-Saharan Africa at the dawn of independence. Due to the fragmentary nature of both institutional and social fabric, these studies argued that the one-party system was an efficient means to enforce internal stability in the newly-formed African nations.<sup>103</sup> Throughout the 1950s and 1960s there was a need for a strong, centralised political entity and institutional framework capable of appealing to the masses and firmly leading the independent countries. From this viewpoint, Somalia also required

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<sup>100</sup> The Administrator's Cabinet, Telexpress to the Italian Government in Rome', 14<sup>th</sup> April 1959, Mogadishu, n. 2051; ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 9, busta 4.

<sup>101</sup> Minister Franca, Telegram to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, 14<sup>th</sup> April 1959, Mogadishu. ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 9, busta 4.

<sup>102</sup> British Consulate-General, Mogadishu 10<sup>th</sup> July 1957; TNA, FO 371/125678.

<sup>103</sup> Coleman, Rosberg (eds.), *Political Parties*, pp. 4-8.

a robust ruling system to ensure political stability over competing different interests. The context of the Cold War, as illustrated in this chapter, constituted a challenge to internal stability to the point that Egyptian propaganda contributed in part to the split within Somalia's most important political expression, the Somali Youth League. Arguably, the establishment of the one-party system in Somalia reflected the contingent need to develop a united and robust response to certain destabilising forces.

However and in that differently from other contemporary ruling parties, the Somali Youth League was a relative young political organisation that did not have the backing of well-defined social groups as the trade union base of Guinean nationalists,<sup>104</sup> or the pivotal mineworkers' support to the United National Independence Party in Zambia.<sup>105</sup> As argued in chapters two and four, although the Somali Youth League developed an efficient strategy that successfully engaged in dialogue with the masses in the 1940s, this process was put on hold and repressed by the imposition of the trusteeship system of the UN in 1950. The system advanced self-government by imposing restrictive political conditions that were ultimately accepted by political parties. The result was, as argued in chapter four, the verticalisation of Somali nationalism that, once inserted in a highly centralised and fixed institutional framework, came to lose its original horizontal and inclusive political line.

The case of All India Muslim League in Pakistan makes a good comparison with the case study under investigation. As the Somali Youth League enjoyed a rapid success in the 1940s, the All India Muslim League capably catalysed the masses' anti-colonial feelings by demanding Pakistan's independence in 1940 and achieving the goal within a few years. However, once Pakistan was created the All India Muslim League failed to address and aggregate the different groups' interests in the process of state-building and its repressive autocratic policy of exclusion eventually

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<sup>104</sup> Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, pp. 219-54.

<sup>105</sup> On the relations between the Party and the Mineworkers' Union see Bates, *Union, Parties*, chapter 7.

undermined the stability of the whole country.<sup>106</sup> Similarly, the Somali Youth League gained power in a crucial transitional period of state-building however it failed to promote an inclusive form of national governments and to address the needs of the different Somali communities and minority groups. In fact, the national message promoted by the League came at odds with state domain inherited from AFIS.

Structural features contributed to this failure. The trusteeship system scheduled a demanding development plan in the fields of education, economics, state-building and democratisation within ten years. As argued by recent literature on state-building in the post-Cold War era, the imposition of state-building via international administration is often problematic. In particular, certain scholars have pointed out that when pursuing the consolidation of more than one process at the same time the robustness and stability of the institutional framework are often compromised. As Hehir and Robinson have remarked ‘not only does building state, democracy and market at the same time run the risk of one or more of the processes corrupting the others, it actually provides incentives for such behaviour and hence for the ruination of all and the perpetuation of state weakness.’<sup>107</sup>

The transitional character of the trusteeship system in Somalia was characterised by the establishment of overlapping structures. Self-government was imposed when the Somali state was still in the process of transition and the Somalisation of this fragile state structure had the accidental consequence of enhancing misuse of power and, eventually, widespread corruption. Additionally, a certain degree of confusion arose around concepts like state, government, ruling party and regime. As seen in some of the quotes in use for this chapter, these terms became synonyms and were indistinctively used by political activists to refer to the political leadership in power.

Another point to consider is the great emphasis placed by AFIS on the elections –considered a key moment within the process of devolution of power and ‘Somalisation’ of the state. This emphasis had two main consequences: first, it

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<sup>106</sup> Sumantra Bose, ‘Decolonization and State Building in South Asia’, *Journal of International Affairs*, 58 (2004).

<sup>107</sup> Aidan Hehir, Neil Robinson (eds.), *State-Building. Theory and Practice*, (Oxon: Routledge, 2007), p. 14.

increased the level of political competition among political parties and in particular between the League and HDMS, the two main parties representing different socioeconomic and regional interests. As seen in the examples provided throughout this chapter, the response of the ruling party to this context of increasing competition was to foster its autocratic, centralising political line. Throughout the 1959 electoral campaign, local branches of the opposition were induced to merge with the League and after the elections key members of the opposition were given state positions and some were made MPs for the ruling party: the chairman of the Somali Democratic Party Abdullahi Haji, its general secretary Mohamed Shek Osman, and Haji Mohamed considered by AFIS among the most-qualified government functionaries; additionally the former HDMS chairman Abdi Nur Mohamed Hussein and the chairman Abulqadir Mohamed Aden who passionately denounced the government's repressive policies and abuse of power during the electoral campaigns.<sup>108</sup> This aggregating policy necessarily weakened the cohesion of the ruling party both at a top and bottom levels, and hindered the development of a healthy opposition.

Second, absorbed with issues related to elections and electoral campaign, the Somali government neglected tasks of vital importance for the future republic. Among these tasks, the formulation of the Constitutional Chart of the Somali Republic suffered greatly from the increasing political competition. The decolonisation plan dictated that in 1956 two committees had to be formed in order to work collaboratively and complementary on the Somali constitution. On the one hand, a Political Committee, constituted by representative of the Somali government and political parties, had the task of elaborating the Constitutional Chart according to the needs and aspirations of the political parties.<sup>109</sup> On the other, a Technical Committee, constituted by nine Italian 'experts' on juridical matters, had the task to assist the work of the Political Committee and to provide the juridical framework for

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<sup>108</sup> The Administrator's Cabinet, Telexpress to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 14<sup>th</sup> April 1949, Mogadishu, n. 2071; ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 9, busta 4.

<sup>109</sup> The Political Committee was constituted as follows: the President of the Assembly Aden Abdullah Osman, who acted as leader of the Committee; the Prime Minister Abdullahi Issa Mahamud; all the ministers; the undersecretaries and the vice-president of the Assembly, the parties' leaders and a representative for each political parties of the Assembly.

the constitution.<sup>110</sup> However and despite the emphasis placed on the joint effort, the two committees never collaborated. In fact, while the Technical Committee was instituted and began its work in 1957, the Political Committee ‘never really began its work, actually its composition was never fully achieved’ because of the majority’s refusal to work with the opposition.<sup>111</sup> When in April 1959, under the pressure from AFIS, the Legislative Assembly finally instituted the Political Committee, the works for the constitutional chart were almost completed.<sup>112</sup>

The Somali constitution, approved by the Assembly on 26<sup>th</sup> June 1960, was the result of the exclusive work of the Italian ‘experts’ on juridical matters who, unsurprisingly, produced a constitutional chart that was ‘an imitation, not to say a copy, of the 1948 Italian constitutional chart’.<sup>113</sup> The Republic of Somalia, thus, adopted a constitutional model that had very little regard for issues related to the specificity of the Somali society. Moreover, although inspired by the principles of the Enlightenment, the Italian constitutional model was taken from a very young republic (established in 1946 only) with little experience of republican matters. Issues related to Somali identity, citizenship and national politics indicated as fundamental by recent studies on constitution-writing in post-Soviet Europe, were, therefore, dismissed.<sup>114</sup>

The autocratic policy of the Somali government hindered the possibility of different political parties being able to confront one another for the construction of a new state based on people’s needs and aspirations. In fact, the different expectations of the agriculturist, pastoral and urban communities were never addressed. The drafting of the Constitution Chart, for instance, did not leave space for discussion

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<sup>110</sup> Costanzo, *Problemi Costituzionali della Somalia*, pp. 17-19.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>112</sup> The committee was constituted by: 2 representatives for each of the 6 main political parties the Somali Youth League, the Hisbia Dastur Mustaqil Somali, the Great Somali League, the Somali National Union, the Liberal Party Young Somalis and the African National Union; a Minister of the Constituency; 2 experts in religious matters; 2 traders; 2 representative of students’ union; 1 representative of trade unions. *Libro Verde*, p. 37.

<sup>113</sup> A. A. Bootaan, ‘La costituzione somala del 1990’, in E. Grande (ed.), *Transplants innovation and legal tradition in the Horn of Africa*, (Turin: L’Harmattan Italia, 1995), pp. 132-133. On the Somali Constitutional Chart see also, D’Antonio, *La Costituzione Somala*.

<sup>114</sup> Bill Kissane, Nick Sitter, ‘National identity and constitutionalism in Europe: Introduction’, *Nations and Nationalism*, 16:1 (2010).



between those who supported the creation of a unitary state and those who instead wanted a federal state.<sup>115</sup> This circumstance was very unfortunate especially considering that the Somali Constitution had to serve for the unification of British Somaliland whose political parties were excluded from the discussion. The British Consul in Mogadishu commented the work on the Somali constitution of the Legislative Assembly in the following way:

Can [Somaliland] be expected to welcome a Constitution that caters solely for Somalia's needs, is anti-tribal, inclined to laicism and aims at a strongly centralised administration? ... There is no sign whatsoever in Mogadishu that the Government of Somalia, preparing the way for complete independence next year, is taking Somaliland interests into account when making financial, economic, cultural and educational agreements with foreign Powers, more especially Italy.<sup>116</sup>

Eventually the Somali Constitution was rejected by Somaliland communities in a national referendum in 1961. The same year, a group of young officials from Somaliland attempted a coup to secede the union.

## 5.5 Conclusion

The previous chapter argued that the state-construction during AFIS imposed a series of institutional patterns that led to the 'verticalisation' of Somali nationalism into autocratic and centralised post-colonial state whose structure was ambivalently clan-based at the bottom and nationally oriented at the top. This chapter investigated the effects of the trusteeship system on the everyday politics and argued that the peculiarities of the institutional framework imposed by AFIS together with the destabilising influence of other powers led to the establishment of the '*Monocolore*' state and suppression of the opposition. By scheduling four elections, two municipal

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<sup>115</sup> The Somali Youth League supported the idea of creating a unitary state with a centralised power; the opposition instead pushed for the formation of a federal republic with high degree of autonomy for the regions. These different views reflected different interests: in particular the opposition aimed to secure the interest of the agriculturist populations of the southern regions whose representation had been, according to the opposition, penalised in the public sector. Lewis, *A Modern History*, p. 157.

<sup>116</sup> A.C. Kendall, British Consulate-General, Mogadishu, 6<sup>th</sup> April 1959, JG/0111/3 in 'Internal Political Situation in Somaliland Protectorate', TNA, FO 371/138347.

and two national, within five years, the decolonisation plan of the trusteeship system placed a great emphasis on the electoral process. For this reason, issues related to the electoral competition became central throughout the legislation. The result was the creation of a political space of, to quote a member of the opposition, ‘political immaturity’ where winning and keeping the majority was the only aim of politics.

By 1959 the autocratic and centralising policy of the majority reached completion. The opposition, curbed and excluded from power, was forced to revise its strategy. From this moment onwards, Somali politics came to be characterised by a dual political system: clan-based at the bottom-level and centralised at the top-level. In provision of political elections, an increasing number of political organisations mushroomed based on clan-ties. However, as soon as the elections were over, the elected candidates of the small parties joined the League. This trend began with the first Legislative Assembly when the government pressured local branches of the opposition to close down or to merge with the League.

The emergence of this political space had two important consequences on Somali politics whose appreciation is essential for understanding the development of post-independence politics, especially for those studies that are concerned with the emergence of a political discourse based on clan. Absorbed with issues related to elections and electoral campaign, the Somali government failed to promote an inclusive political discourse as seen by the case of formulation of the Constitutional Chart of the Somali Republic. Thus, the emergence of a political discourse based on clan, discussed by certain Somalist scholars, should be considered a reaction to the emergence of a restrictive political arena rather than the cause of the failure of democracy.

Finally, the phase of self-government led to the emergence of a political discourse that monopolised and revived nationalism. Accordingly, nationalist features, as the project of Greater Somalia, were used to overshadow issues related to domestic crisis. One of the elements of this discourse centred on the external threat constituted by the unresolved border issue with Ethiopia. Speaking at the post-electoral League meeting the president of the Legislative Assembly Aden Abdullah Osman addressed the audience as follows:

It would be good if all Somalis remained in agreement and united instead of fighting against each other because of petty political rivalries. Let's all think of our true enemies, enemies like Ethiopia... These are the enemies we should fight with all our strengths and [we should] not indulge in hatred and useless polemics with our own people. We have to be united, to abandon any factionalism, only in this way we can be morally and physically ready to face any possible attacks from the enemy.<sup>117</sup>

The ways in which this political discourse manipulated nationalism affecting the process of unification and completing the 'verticalisation' of the Somali political space will be the object of study of the next chapter.

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<sup>117</sup>'Aden Abdulla Osman's speech at the League's meeting', 25<sup>th</sup> February 1959, Mogadishu. ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 9, busta 4.

## Chapter 6: 'The guardians of the nation': Unifying Somalia, struggling for the gate

*'...Lower this flag and hoist this one in its place...  
This flag that God provided us with and,  
Which nobody gave us as charity... '*  
Cabdilaahi Suldaan Timacade, 26<sup>th</sup> June 1960<sup>1</sup>

### 6.1 Introduction

The lines above are part of a song composed by the Somali poet Cabdillahi Suldaan Timacade on the occasion of Somaliland's Independence Day on June, 26 1960. People's enthusiasm was palpable. The hockey stadium in Hargeysa was filled with massive and joyful crowds which gathered together to witness the event.<sup>2</sup> Timacade's song narrated the moment of independence by capturing evocatively the symbolic lowering of the British flag and raising of the Somali blue flag featuring a white five-pointed star. In 1960, this flag assumed a special significance as its white star symbolised the union of the five Somali-speaking regions in the Horn of Africa, also known as the national project of Greater Somalia. A few days later, on July, 1 1960, another well-attended ceremony put down the Italian and UN flags and raised the same blue flag in Mogadishu. On the same day, following negotiations that started years before, the two regions merged together forming the Somali Republic, and marking what it was perceived to be the first step towards Greater Somalia.

The unification of Somalia and Somaliland did not come without practical problems. For decades, the two regions had been ruled by different colonial regimes. At the eve of independence, the two institutional apparatus could have not been more dissimilar. For instance, colonial policies drafted different reforms and plans thus achieving different results. In addition, education, administrative and legal systems

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<sup>1</sup> Cabdilaahi Suldaan Timacade, 'Kaana Siib Kaana Saar' Song of Somaliland's independence. Courtesy of Boobe Yussuf Duale, August, 2009, Hargeysa.

<sup>2</sup> Interview, 24<sup>th</sup> June, 2009.

had also been conceived separately and run in different, colonial, languages.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, throughout the 1960s and most the 1970s, there was a tendency among scholars to overlook these practical obstructions proposing instead attention to homogenous elements within Somali society as a source of unity for the country. It was contended that Somalia was one of the very few homogenous countries in Africa, in terms of ethnicity, culture, language and history.<sup>4</sup> It was claimed that, in spite of colonial partitions, Somalia had always been a ‘virtual nation’ but lacked a centralised administration. In this sense, the republic of Somalia emerged in ‘truncated circumstances’<sup>5</sup> and, as a result, irredentism would have played a big role in Somali national politics because Somalia was a nation ‘in search of state’.<sup>6</sup>

However, as pointed out in the introductory chapter, the dissolution of the nation-state in Somalia pushed scholars to revise previous historiography and to challenge ideas regarding the homogeneity of Somali society. At the same time, primordialist approaches took a clear stand in the debate highlighting that the paradigm of agnation – the clan system – is provided with centripetal and centrifugal forces that respectively push towards union and desegregation, the latter having been predominant in recent decades. More recent approaches have pursued a balance between these trends. For instance, in analysing the core features of Pan-Somalism, Schraeder emphasises that, while its origins were embedded in historical processes fostered by the Second World War, most notably the class formation of political elites, the development and dissolution of Somali nationalism (nation-state) are attributable to both centrifugal/centripetal forces along clan lines, and to instrumental uses of nationalism by self-interested political leadership.<sup>7</sup>

Although this approach has the merits to set the basis for comparison with other case studies, it does not suffice to explain the reasons why the historical trajectory that led to the dissolution of the nation-state by clan cleavages and elites’

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<sup>3</sup> For a detailed discussion on these diversities and how they had been tackled see Contini, *The Somali Republic*.

<sup>4</sup> The others being Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland. A. I. Asiwaju (ed. by), *Partitioned Africans: Ethnic Relations Across Africa's International Boundaries 1884-1984*, (London: Hurst & Co., 1985).

<sup>5</sup> Lewis, ‘The Politics of the 1969’, p. 384.

<sup>6</sup> As summarised by the title of a well-known monograph on Somali politics. Laitin, Samatar, *Somalia: A Nation*.

<sup>7</sup> Schraeder, ‘From Irredentism to Secession’.

interests passed through unification first. Certain degrees of ethnic homogeneity might help understanding irredentist aspirations and grass-roots support to Greater Somalia, however, it remains less clear why self-interested political elites fostered unification rather than pursuing their interests within the borders inherited from colonial partitions. A comparison with the development of local politics in Djibouti helps appreciating this problematic. Similar to *Somalia Italiana* where the project of Greater Somalia managed to catalyse grass-roots support in spite of the radicalisation of different groups' interests, nationalist and irredentist agenda was met by a certain degree of popularity in Djibouti in the late 1940s.<sup>8</sup> This, however, was not encouraged by the French rule and the restricted pro-French ethnic Somali political leadership which managed to amass solid control over state institutions and resources without 'squandering whatever degree of pan-Somali nationalism existed' as, Schraeder contends, did their counterparts in Somalia.<sup>9</sup>

This final chapter of the thesis provides more historically informed insights to this problematic. It argues that a combination of factors needs to be taken into account as this contributed to advance plans for the unification. A series of pressures from below, consisting of people's support and commitment to the project of Greater Somalia, were coupled with the development of external activities, that is on the one hand the (re)definition of colonial partitions as the cession of Haud and RA to Ethiopia and on the other, the missed definition of the border between Ethiopia and Somalia during AFIS. From this perspective, it is possible to make use of approaches to the studies of political unification which indicate external threats to internal security as main reasons behind the process.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, the final partition (and/or the missed partition) of the Horn of Africa provided with a context of insecurity which played a significant role in the process of unification of Somalia and Somaliland.

Moreover, the chapter points out how the establishment of considerable investments for development plans in economic, social and political fields during

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<sup>8</sup> Touval, *Somali Nationalism*, pp. 69-70, see also chapter 10; Lewis, *Modern Political Movements*, pp. 344-6.

<sup>9</sup> Schraeder, 'From Irredentism to Secession', p. 108.

<sup>10</sup> William H. Riker, *Federalism: Origin, Operation, Significance*, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1964).

AFIS contributed to draw considerable attention upon *Somalia Italiana* within the area of Greater Somalia. This led other social and politic groups to claim their allotments in the processes of nation and state building on the ground of sharing common national aspirations. In exploring this historical context, the chapter makes a further contribution to current debates on Somali studies. It illustrates how, during the process of national unification, the model of a verticalised, autocratic and exclusive state emerging from AFIS, discussed in the previous chapters, was extended to the project of Greater Somalia which by 1960 had become the exclusive domain of a few political contenders.

The chapter begins with an analysis of the special role played by *Somalia Italiana* and by the Somali Youth League within the area of Greater Somalia. It illustrates how this circumstance led to an increase of demands from below that urged to revive the campaign for the unification. At the same time, the political leadership from other Somali-speaking regions advanced their ambitions over the structures of power in Somalia. Under the guise of unifying the nation, competition for the control of the state expanded, including contenders from the Somaliland Protectorate. Before turning the analysis to the campaign for the unification, the chapter draws an overview of the territorial adjustments made by the British in the mid-1950s. It argues that these adjustments spurred the revival of nationalist propaganda in the Somaliland Protectorate. As a result, the political leadership made use of the campaign for the unification in order to oppose the territorial adjustments made by the British. The final part of the chapter is devoted to the issue of manipulation and monopolisation of the project of Greater Somalia by the leadership of the Somali Youth League. Due to a context of increasing pressures, the League's leadership appropriated the domain of Greater Somalia and influenced the process of unification. By doing so, the League's leadership aimed to establish a solid control over the Somali 'gate' state system.

## 6.2 The 'lighthouse for freedom in East Africa': *Somalia Italiana* and the Somali Youth League within the area of Greater Somalia

Since the late 1940s, *Somalia Italiana* came to assume a distinct position within the Somali-speaking regions due to the processes of decolonisation and self-government imposed by the UN. Already in 1949 following the public declaration of the UN resolution, it became clear that, to a certain extent, *Somalia Italiana* had been more successful in advancing its political aspirations. By the late 1940s, political activities and, more generally, organisations, had been banned in the Ogaden, Haud, RA, and Northern Frontier's District and the prospect of territorial unification precluded. Conversely, in the trust region, in spite of the repressive measures adopted by AFIS, political parties not only remained solid but new associations were formed throughout the 1950s. Moreover, the decolonisation plan provided these organisations with a certain, even though restricted, representation within the governing bodies.

More important, independence was granted to *Somalia Italiana* in 1949 already, and the terms and conditions of the trusteeship were conceived accordingly. This constituted an unusual trend for the time. Where in 1950 issues like self-government and independence had not even been raised in British Somaliland and Djibouti, a fast and demanding plan of self-government began in *Somalia Italiana* and was proceeding at full speed. This programme established representative councils, training courses, scholarships programmes, and scheduled multiple administrative and national elections. It also introduced a progressive 'Somalisation' of the state by appointing trained Somalis to institutional posts. In 1956 most governing bodies and military force had been 'Somalised'. This contrasted with similar reforms in the Somaliland Protectorate whose results looked scanty in comparison: there were 5,000 Somali occupying institutional posts in the trust region compared to only 30 in the Protectorate.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> John Markakis, *National and Class Revolution in the Horn of Africa*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 53.



Possibly the most impressive measure taken towards self-government in *Somalia Italiana* was the organisation of a series of elections, two municipal and two national since 1954. The 1956 and 1959 political elections elected two Legislative Assemblies, both led by the Somali Youth League, which enjoyed a good deal of autonomy over domestic affairs. In the 1958 municipal and 1959 national elections, universal suffrage was broadened up to include women, representing a very progressive trend not just with respect to colonial Africa but to the whole world.<sup>12</sup>

The symbolic role played by the Somali Youth League in this context was also very important. As discussed in chapter two, since its foundation in 1943 the party developed from a Mogadishu-based organisation to a wide-spread national mass-party. By promoting national unification and links of solidarity among Somali communities, it campaigned for Greater Somalia before the UN and across the Somali-speaking regions. For this reason, when in 1956 the party was elected to lead the first Legislative Assembly, it came to symbolise the success of Somali nationalism. As a response to the League's achievements, a series of demands and pressures began to address the Somali government. These came from outside the trust region by Somalis who thought that a campaign for Greater Somalia would enhance collective standards of living conditions. Significantly, it was a new wave of youth associations which was uninvolved into top-level politics but witnessed national campaigns and propaganda of the 1940s, to urge for territorial unification.

New youth movements were founded in Cairo by students from Somaliland, Somalia and Djibouti who moved to Egypt to pursue education.<sup>13</sup> As discussed in the previous chapter, scholarship programmes had been set up by the Egyptian government with the aim to counterbalance the plans made by AFIS in the field of education. Perhaps under this influence, the youth movements began to revive and promote the project of Greater Somalia. Thanks to some private donations, they founded an association, namely the Somali Office, which worked independently from the associations and political leaderships of British Somaliland and *Somalia*

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<sup>12</sup> It is perhaps worth remembering that women were granted suffrage in 1946 in Italy and in 1973 in Switzerland.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Sahara Abdulqadir Haji Ahmed, 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2009, Hargeysa.

*Italiana*.<sup>14</sup> Their propaganda consisted of printed issues and radiobroadcasts transmitted on a regular base to comment on politics in the Horn of Africa.<sup>15</sup> They had close connections with the editors of the magazine *The Horn of Africa*, published in Somaliland at the time.<sup>16</sup>

The ways in which the propaganda of the youth movements attempted to revive the project of Greater Somalia is important to understand the level of pressures that arose around national politics. It also sheds light on the resolute reaction of the League's leadership to these pressure. The Somali Office in Cairo constructed an ambivalent and subtle discourse that invested the League's leadership as 'the chiefs' in the realm of Greater Somalia and made them accountable for the plans of national unification. In this sense, the following extract is very telling. It is a piece broadcasted by Radio Cairo in 1959 to comment on the election of the second Legislative Assembly in Mogadishu which was marked by an overwhelming victory of the League. The opening lines of the speech pay tribute to the ruling party as a sign of official recognition of its achievements:

We are not surprised at this victory, which was won by those calling for the unity of Somaliland [the Somali-speaking regions], especially when we bear in mind that they were the first to take the Somaliland case to the UN and the whole word [i.e. in the late 1940s]; it is a chain of continuous victories...

Nevertheless, soon, it demanded the League to honour its national obligations and to fulfil unification:

It is our right to call those gentlemen [the Somali Youth League's leadership] into account, especially after this victory... Free Somalis who were elected by the people in Somalia to represent them in the first free Parliament, we beg you not to overlook or despise the hopes the Somali people have placed in you, making you their guardians, for universal Somaliland unity. We beg you to awaken it from its deep slumber and march forwards it without fear... The Somali people in their great homeland look for the Government soon to be formed with hearts full of faith and trust, begging it to do its best to achieve their national ambitions

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<sup>14</sup> According to AFIS, the Somali Office was established due to some unspecified 'private initiative'. The Administrator's Cabinet, 'Note on the activities of the Somali Office in Cairo', 14<sup>th</sup> December 1959, Mogadishu; ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 9, busta 2.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid..

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Sahara Abdulqadir Haji Ahmed, 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2009, Hargeysa

represented by universal unity and free independence, our people also swear in the name of Almighty God, to stand as one rank behind their Government to enable it to attain these goals. They will accept no substitute.<sup>17</sup>

By acknowledging the League's position of predominance in national politics and making it the 'guardian' of the nation, the discourse made the party subject to demands coming from within the area of Greater Somalia. In this way, the Somali Office in Cairo advanced ideas on how to proceed forward on the issues:

Call upon the U. N., the Security Council and the international court to intervene immediately and put an end to the British and French forces, which are being carried out in Ethiopia.

Call upon the U. N. to send an international commission to Somalia to grant self-determination to the Somali people with a view to gaining their complete liberty and unity in accordance with the principles of the U. N. and with the charter of the rights of man.

Consider the current events in Somalia contrary to our people's wishes and to consider the brutal method used by French and Ethiopian imperialists as threatening to world peace and stability.<sup>18</sup>

The political line adopted by the Somali Office was straightforward and radical. In reviving the collective project of Greater Somalia, the objective was to 'collectivise' the control over the process of state-building in the trust region and to have a say on its developments:

Somalia must be a lighthouse for freedom in East Africa. This will not be possible without reinforcing the internal situation. It is hoped that the caravan of

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<sup>17</sup> (Author unknown), 'Summary of World Broadcasts. Part IV. The Arab World, Israel, Greece, Turkey, Iran' 1<sup>st</sup> April 1959, daily series, no. 817; in 'Broadcasts from Egypt to Somalia by Radio Cairo'; TNA, FO 371/138344.

<sup>18</sup> The first two articles published by the Somali Office addressed the French-Ethiopian agreement which regulated the control of the railway Addis-Djibouti. The articles accused the agreement of being imperialist and against the Pan-Somali interests: 'It [the French-Ethiopian agreement] is detrimental to our people in the [F]rench and [E]thiopian Somalia and prevents them from taking part in nationalist politics.' Additionally, the Office claimed to organise demonstrations across the Somali-speaking regions to protest against the French and Ethiopian agreement; moreover, the Office called for the United Nations to apply the principle of self-determination for Somali communities. The Administrator's Cabinet, 'Note on the activities of the Somali Office in Cairo', 14<sup>th</sup> December 1959, Mogadishu; ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 9, busta 2.

national solidarity will proceed faster than ever on the road of democracy, independence and unity.<sup>19</sup>

Further aspects need to be considered, especially in relation to the Italian initiatives in the realm of local economic development. As pointed out by Cooper, notions and plans of development became central themes of the post-war colonial policies and African aspirations.<sup>20</sup> Although actions were directed towards different fields, a great deal of attention focused on the plans and initiatives to boost economic growth. The establishment of the Trusteeship System of the UN was also embedded with the notion of 'development'. The Italian administration in Somalia was expected to fulfil a series of achievements in the economic, political and social systems, coupled with the established of structural infrastructures.<sup>21</sup> However, as the system was preoccupied more with the results rather than the actual practice, it became less clear what these expectations meant. In particular, questions arose on the ways through which these achievements were going to be completed within ten years. To face this problematic, a series of debates, propositions, discussions among 'experts' and academics took place in Italian newspapers and magazines starting by the late 1940s.<sup>22</sup> However, these discussions did not produce well-defined and forward-looking plans, but fostered large-scale investments which proved fruitless, at best, in the long term.<sup>23</sup>

By 1950, considerable funds were established for the implementation of socioeconomic development plans in *Somalia Italiana*. Lacking clear programme, economic plans addressed the agricultural system of production, where colonial interests lied, trade, and the commercialisation of livestock.<sup>24</sup> AFIS economic initiatives centred on the banana production, to greatest extent controlled by Italian farmers, advancing irrigation schemes. Additionally, agreements were signed

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<sup>19</sup> (Author unknown), 'Summary of World Broadcasts'; in TNA, FO 371/138344.

<sup>20</sup> Cooper, *African Since 1940*, pp. 91-3.

<sup>21</sup> The final report, completed by AFIS and presented to the Italian government in 1961, offers a detailed overview of these programmes. See, *Libro Verde*, especially chapters 3-4.

<sup>22</sup> See for instance, the lengthy debate that took place in the Italian magazine *Relazioni Internazionali* from 1949 onwards.

<sup>23</sup> Great part of the final report on AFIS produced by the Italian government was devoted to discussion of economic investments and achievements in Somalia. See *Libro Verde*, Section III.

<sup>24</sup> See *Ibid.*, chapter 3.

according to which Italy would purchase at least 65 % of the export production of bananas.<sup>25</sup> Further arrangements established that the Italian government would support Somalia with US\$ 2million per year after independence.<sup>26</sup>

Scholars' assessments of the economic initiatives carried out by AFIS tend to suggest that they increased Somalia's dependency on Italian aid and support,<sup>27</sup> while negatively shaped state/society relations.<sup>28</sup> However, it should not be underestimated the impression that these initiatives made at the time, in particular where similar policies had not even been contemplated. In the British protectorate, for instance, the political leadership was positively impressed by the quality and the speed of the development programme in the trust region. Conversely, similar reforms were proceeding at a very slow pace in the British protectorate.<sup>29</sup> As a response to this disparity, the local leadership began to demand for the implementation of equal development programmes.<sup>30</sup> These demands were soon paralleled with demands for the unification with *Somalia Italiana*. The shift led to an expansion of the competition over the governing bodies, or over the 'gate' state of the trust region.

Frederick Cooper's concept of 'gatekeeper state' is useful to understand this competition. The establishment of a 'gate' state system, as a part of the colonial legacy, provides insights on the failure of African states to perform their political and economic functions properly. Similar to their colonial predecessors, African states

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<sup>25</sup> These agreements, designed to give benefit to the Italian farmers in Somalia, became a matter of controversy in Italy at the time. See Ernesto Rossi's 1952 reports on the Italian lobbies interested in the banana trade and plantations published in the newspaper *Il Mondo* and collected recently in Rossi, *Settimo: Non Rubare*, pp. 451-71.

<sup>26</sup> Tripodi, *The Colonial Legacy*, pp. 95-6.

<sup>27</sup> A comprehensive study on AFIS political economy is Karp *The Economics of Trusteeship in Somalia*. Further assessments can be found in: Umberto Triulzi, 'L'Italia e l'Economia Somala dal 1950 ad Oggi', *Africa*(Rome), 26:4 (1971); Del Boca, *Nostalgia delle Colonie*, Part II, chapters 2-3; Lewis, *A Modern History*, pp. 142-4.

<sup>28</sup> Samatar, Samatar, 'The Material Roots', pp. 674-9.

<sup>29</sup> Lewis, *A Modern History*, pp. 148-55.

<sup>30</sup> Following the visit of a political delegation from Somaliland to the trust region in 1956, political leaders raised a series of demands to the British administration in the protectorate. As the delegation remained positively impressed by the social and political achievements and by the investments and economic opportunities in the trust region, they asked for the implementation of similar programmes in the British protectorate. For instance, one of these demands was the establishment of 'self-government without control of foreign affairs or defence and with some limitations on financial control.' Author unknown, 'Note of a Meeting between the Secretary of State for the Colonies and Political Parties', 8th February, 1959, Hargeysa; in 'Activities of Political Parties in Somalia and British Somaliland' TNA, CO 1015/1769.

derived their authority chiefly from international recognition. However, they struggled to extend their power inwardly in an effective way. In this way, since independence, African states have become ‘gates’ through which the revenues from taxes, customs and foreign aid are collected and distributed. Getting hold of the gate and its institutions became instrumental for accessing the resources it controlled. In this way, Cooper suggests that post-colonial politics were reduced to conflicts among political and economic contenders over the control of the gatekeeper state.<sup>31</sup> Within the area of Greater Somalia, the imposition of AFIS with its plans, reforms, and investments, attracted attention upon the ‘gate’ emerging in the trust region. It was this attention, as well as the lack of equalities among regions, that contributed to foster the plans for unification. In addition to this, it is important to note the role played by the late territorial adjustments of the Haud and RA made by the British in 1954. As next section discusses, these dispositions contributed to create a sense of insecurity around foreign and domestic affairs fostering the plans and campaign for the unification of Somalia and Somaliland.

### 6.3 The campaign for unification

The historical trajectory of post-war Somali national politics took a sudden turn towards unification following the late territorial adjustments made by the British in the Horn of Africa. These arrangements completed the post-war disposal of the former Italian colonies and territories occupied by enemies’ armies during the conflict. With this regard, the disposition of Haud and RA took a long time to be completed. The Haud and RA are Somali-speaking regions situated at the eastern border with the today Republic of Somaliland and are important to Somaliland because they provide grazing lands for Somali communities who usually entered the area with their cattle in the spring and remained there until the autumn.<sup>32</sup> After signing treaties of protection with Somali communities in 1884-6, the British administration made a further agreement, the 1897 Anglo-Ethiopian Treaty, to

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<sup>31</sup> Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, pp. 156-61.

<sup>32</sup> Drysdale, *The Somali Dispute*, p. 79.

delimitate the spheres of influences between the protectorate and Ethiopia.<sup>33</sup> This treaty put the Haud and RA regions under Ethiopia's sphere of influence, although its control of the area remained loose. Following the Italian attack on Ethiopia in 1935, these regions were annexed to a single, centralised Somali-speaking colony which in 1940 included the British protectorate as well. At the end of the Second World War, the British proposed to maintain the territorial adjustments made by the Italians and that these regions remained annexed to a single Somali-speaking territory. In spite of the fact that this was rejected during international negotiations and that Ethiopia's sovereignty in the area was ratified in 1942-44 already, the British kept formal control of the regions and withdrew in 1954 only.

It is important to emphasise that the late territorial adjustments contributed to foster irredentist claims throughout the regions. As discussed in chapter two, in the Ogaden, Haud and RA irredentist aspirations were catalysed by a group of Somali entrepreneurs who had benefited from the Italian occupation and who in the 1940s supported the idea of Greater Somalia in order to advance their interests as opposed to Ethiopian rule.<sup>34</sup> On a similar note, in the British protectorate local communities supported the irredentist claims due to economic and cultural ties with the Haud and RA, as most of the livestock for the trade came from the area.<sup>35</sup> The hand-over of the Haud and RA was therefore marked by popular discontent and 'massive' demonstrations against the adjustments took place especially in the regions under concern and in the British protectorate.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, the hand-over marked the beginning of the unification campaign in the British protectorate and revival of the idea of Greater Somalia. Another matter of concern was constituted by the 'missed' partition of the border between Ethiopia and *Somalia Italiana*. This long-lasting border dispute, which had never been really defined, was due to be settled during

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<sup>33</sup> Lewis, *A Modern History*, pp. 129-31. The 1897 Anglo-Ethiopian Treaty placed the Haud and RA under Ethiopian control and acknowledged Somali grazing rights in the area. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the issue produced a bitter debate among scholars and policy-makers which discussed the legitimacy of this treaty producing conflicting interpretations.

<sup>34</sup> Barnes, 'The Somali Youth League', p. 283.

<sup>35</sup> Samatar, *The State and Rural Transformation*, chapter 2.

<sup>36</sup> Lewis, *A Modern History*, p. 151.

AFIS. However, as discussed in chapter four, Ethiopian and Italian governments failed to do so and the border was settled through arbitrary procedures.

The late territorial partitions and the missed partition of the Somali-speaking regions had a series of negative consequence on political developments in the area. Most notably, they set the background to multiple conflicts among neighbouring countries keeping alive a certain tradition of expansionist trends in the area.<sup>37</sup> In the short term, these adjustments contributed to foster a sense of insecurity and uncertainty over foreign and domestic affairs. The context of insecurity led to a revival of the project of Greater Somalia and, as a consequence, to sudden demands by the political leadership of Somaliland for unification with Somalia.

### **6.3.1 The National United Front, the campaign for the ‘lost territories’ and revival of Greater Somalia**

Following the completion of the territorial adjustments, a new movement, the National United Front (NUF) was formed in the protectorate with the aim to object the disposition of the Haud and RA.<sup>38</sup> Accordingly, a delegation was sent to London to raise concern on the issue. The formation of the NUF, the delegation to London and Michael Mariano, one of the NUF main leaders, became very popular in Somaliland in what is remembered as the campaign to gain back the ‘lost territories’.<sup>39</sup> Looking at today’s memory of the campaign is important to appreciate how the territorial adjustments were perceived and the significance that the prospect of unification assumed within this context. A first element to consider is the solemnity with which the delegation to London is recalled. Oral memories indicate that by taking an official stance and by engaging with colonial rule in the domain of the metropole, the delegation questioned the legitimacy of the Anglo-Ethiopian Treaty and, more generally, of the British rule in Somaliland.<sup>40</sup> The core point that

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<sup>37</sup> Markakis, ‘Ethnic Conflict and the State’, pp. 220-1.

<sup>38</sup> Drysdale, *The Somali Dispute*, p. 75.

<sup>39</sup> Elderly Somalis interviewed for this research recalled that the NUF delegation, headed by Michael Mariano, went to London with the aim ‘to bring the territories back to Somaliland’. Significantly, they claimed that the British had no right to give the regions away and they did so by discarding the treaties signed up with the Somali communities (the 1884-86 treaties).

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Nimco Samater Jama, 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2009, Hargeysa. Interview with ‘Gahaydhee’, 14<sup>th</sup> July 2009, Hargeysa.



emerges is that the British rule had no right to dispose of these regions on the Somali behalf because the treaties of protection signed with local communities in 1884-6 did not contemplate such a right.<sup>41</sup> To prove this point, one of my informants contends that the NUF delegation carried a leather copy of these treaties to London.<sup>42</sup> Another correlated element of this narrative is that the dispositions of the Haud and RA were illegally carried out by the British and as a result, Somalis demanded the end of their colonial rule immediately.<sup>43</sup>

In spite of the efforts, the NUF and its delegation to London did not succeed in renegotiating the issue. In fact, the British administration, although admitting certain irregularities in the disposition of the Haud and RA, declined any responsibilities.<sup>44</sup> Conversely, the formation of the NUF provoked an aggressive response of the Ethiopian government which advanced claims over the project of Greater Somalia. For instance, in 1956 during a trip to Ogaden, the Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie gave a speech in which he appealed for Somali unity within the Ethiopian Empire: 'the Somali people' he contended, were part of 'the Great Ethiopia family'.<sup>45</sup>

Due to these tensions, a sense of disillusion and apprehension for the expansionist trend of neighbouring countries, the attention of Somaliland's political leadership turned on the project of Greater Somalia and unification with *Somalia Italiana*. In 1956, after having failed in seeking support from the British, the NUF asked for the support of the Legislative Assembly led by the Somali Youth League.<sup>46</sup> In doing so, the NUF made use of the popularity gained during the campaign for the

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<sup>41</sup> Interview with Ahmed Ali Hibrahim, 7<sup>th</sup> July 2009, Hargeysa.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Nimco Samater Jama, 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2009, Hargeysa.

<sup>43</sup> It was contended that according to the Anglo-Somali treaties, British control over the Somaliland Protectorate was temporarily. In fact, the agreements stated that 'when the Somalis would tell the British to leave the British would leave.' Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Before the NUF delegation the British would have 'regretted' the arrangement of 1897 Anglo-Ethiopian Treaty but said that they could not ignore it. Lewis, *A Modern History*, p. 152.

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*. This narrative informed some of the Ethiopian press throughout the 1950s. For instance, a few months before Somaliland's independence, the newspaper *Ethiopian Herald* invited the Somali brothers to get back within Ethiopia after 75 years of colonial dominion. Mr. Wright, Telegram no. 244 to FO, Addis Ababa, 7<sup>th</sup> April 1960, in 'Relations between Somaliland Protectorate and Italian Trusteeship of Somalia', TNA, CO 1015/2481.

<sup>46</sup> (Author unknown), 'Extract from Somaliland Protectorate Intelligence Summary 1<sup>st</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> January 1957' (undated); in 'National United Front Party of British Somaliland', TNA, CO 1015/1765.

‘lost territories’ and revived the idea of Greater Somalia and unification with the trust region as a means through which continuing their original campaign.<sup>47</sup> By 1957, these themes gained momentum in the protectorate. The NUF was transformed into political movement and visited Somalia in late 1956. Its popularity increased especially in main towns such as Barbara and Hargeysa. In response, the Somali National League (SNL), the foremost party in Somaliland, began to support unification with *Somalia Italiana* which became a key theme of local politics.<sup>48</sup>

Once more, looking at the memory of the campaign for unification is important to appreciate what the local aspirations were and the importance they assumed locally at the time. A central element of this memory is a certain emotional bond to the Somali national flag with a white five-pointed star as a symbol of territorial unity.<sup>49</sup> By claiming Somaliland’s share over this ‘star’, interviewees opposed the struggle for Greater Somalia to post-colonial developments and the unequal treatment of Somaliland within the union. In this sense, it is significant that most of the interviewees pointed out that the Somali national flag was ideated in the protectorate by a ‘Somalilander’ but eventually taken away from the ‘south’.<sup>50</sup> Another element of the narrative is that Somaliland would unify with Somalia on the condition that the other regions would join immediately after.<sup>51</sup> In this sense, it was claimed that Somaliland had been betrayed by their ‘brothers’ in Djibouti who refused to merge in the Somali Republic.<sup>52</sup>

By the late 1950s, the campaign for the unification became very popular. Local parties organised public meetings on a weekly base in which flyers were distributed and magazines were sold. Although at the time very few people could

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<sup>47</sup> As the NUF statute states: ‘A united independent Somaliland comprising the five Somali territories with the union of Somalia and of the Somaliland Protectorate as the first step towards this end.’ Undated and unreferenced document; TNA, CO 1015/1765.

<sup>48</sup> Government House, ‘Somaliland Protectorate: The Political Scene’, 11<sup>th</sup> February 1958 Hargeysa, despatch no. 118/58, in ‘Reports from Governor on Internal Situation in Somaliland’, TNA, CO 1015/1834.

<sup>49</sup> Still today, the national flag of the Somaliland Republic has a five-pointed star.

<sup>50</sup> Fieldwork notes, Somaliland, 2009. I have not found confirmation of this. However, the Somali flag was in use in *Somalia Italiana* in 1954 already. On the inauguration of the Somali flag see *Il Corriere della Somalia* 6<sup>th</sup> September 1954.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with Abdhullahi Hibraim, 13<sup>th</sup> August 2009, Hargeysa.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. This view was also collected by Alexandra Diaz. Informal conversation, 15<sup>th</sup> June 2011, Uppsala.

read and write in Somaliland, parties' magazines were even purchased to financially support the movements: one of my informants recalled his pauper and illiterate aunt buying the SNL magazine weekly and then using the paper to fill the holes of her hut.<sup>53</sup> Political ferment spread from the urban area to rural areas passing from mouth to mouth, from one place to another within Somaliland and to the Haud and RA.<sup>54</sup> The networks among pastoral communities became ways through which letting the propaganda campaign been heard everywhere. The towns of Barbara and Hargeysa were the centres for exchanging communication, to which pastoral Somalis headed to sell their stock and from where they returned to pastoral life. In addition to these activities, the NUF and the SNL launched a series of protests against the British Administration possibly representing the most significant people's action since the 20-year long war by Sayid Maxamed Cabdhulle Xasan against colonial rule starting in the late 1890s. For instance, the NUF proposed to wear the *wair* (a white mourning head band) on the 28<sup>th</sup> February as a day of mourning for the loss of the Haud and RA.<sup>55</sup> The SNL instead organised crowds protesting against the British, sitting down with their backs to the British Administrator as he was passing by.<sup>56</sup>

The revival of the idea of Greater Somalia within a context of increasing tensions with Ethiopia created a sense of urgency over the prospect of unification. As discussed in the next section, the rapidity that characterised the plans for unification negatively affected the whole process. Issues regarding the actual forms of unification were discarded as well as the ways through which merging the institutional, administrative, economic systems of the two regions, and the role that Somaliland would play within the union.

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<sup>53</sup> Interview with Mohamed Barood Ali, 6<sup>th</sup> July 2009, Hargeysa.

<sup>54</sup> Interview with Nimco Samater Jama, 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2009, Hargeysa.

<sup>55</sup> (Author unknown), 'Extract from Somaliland Protectorate Intelligence Summary 1<sup>st</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> February 1957' ref. no. CAA 43/46/01, TNA, CO 1015/1765.

<sup>56</sup> Jama Mohamed, 'Imperial Policies and Nationalism in the Decolonization of Somaliland, 1954-1960', *English Historical Review*, 117:474 (2002), p. 1199.

### 6.3.2 Rushing into ‘unconditional amalgamation’: poor negotiations and missed opportunities

The previous section illustrated how the late territorial adjustments of Haud and RA led to a revival of the project of Greater Somalia and the campaign for unification in the protectorate. This revived national enthusiasm, however, was not coupled by similar commitment from the leadership of the Somali Youth League. On the contrary, the more requests and pressures for unification increased, the more detached the League became on the issue. The result was a rush into unification with no real intentions to define terms and conditions.

The following two telegrams provide good insights on the ways in which Somali unification was conceived and carried out. The first is the formal request of unification sent by the SNL to the Legislative Assembly in Mogadishu, the second is the Assembly’s official reply. As it appears, not only the telegrams do not dwell beyond the undefined issue of unification but indicated the distinctively different positions held by the two leaderships on the matter. Where the SNL expressed a sense of anxiety and urgency on the issue, the response of the Assembly was vague and less committed. The first was sent in November 1958 by the SNL:

Being the majority in the Protectorate we demand unconditional amalgamation with Somalia in 1960 . We could welcome neutral commission from U.N.O in Protectorate to take plebiscite in this issue. Urgent action on this is absolutely imperative.<sup>57</sup>

To which, the Assembly led by the League replied:

With regard to your telegram 67[sic!], your feelings correspond to the wishes of every Somali wherever he/she is and with the final aim of the whole Somali nation. Meanwhile on the behalf of the Somali people, Assembly and Government, we state out gratitude and thanks, we pray that the Almighty God will help us [in fulfilling] our just and common ambitions.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> The General-Secretary of the Somali National League, Telegram to the Legislative Assembly in Mogadishu’, 5<sup>th</sup> November, Hargeysa; ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 9, busta 4.

<sup>58</sup> The Legislative Assembly, Telegram to the Somali National League, 6<sup>th</sup> November 1958, Mogadishu; ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS. cassa 9, busta 4.

Where the SNL called for ‘unconditional amalgamation’, for the UN to hold a ‘plebiscite’ and for an ‘imperative’ action to be taken as soon as possible, the diplomatically positive but rather less enthusiastic reply of the Somali Youth League stated ‘gratitude’, and appealed to the rhetoric of ‘just and common ambitions’ whose achievement was linked to faith into future and better time to come. In fact, as the Somaliland’s former minister for Foreign Affairs Edna Adan recalls, during private talks between Ibrahim Egal, leader of the SNL, and Aden Abdullah, president of the Assembly, the latter advised the SNL not to advance union with the trust region but to proceed towards friendly relationships between two separated independent states.<sup>59</sup>

The failure to discuss plans for unification in detail had several consequences for the protectorate and for the Somali Republic alike. From one point of view, it precluded the matter from being discussed within Somaliland. This became problematic because the two main parties, the SNL and NUF, held different views on the future of Somaliland and these disparities were never addressed. For instance, the NUF was a pro-Western and ‘moderate’ movement which advanced the idea of Greater Somalia within the Commonwealth and was, for this reason, supported by the Somali Youth League. Conversely, the SNL held a different stance proposing alignment with the Egyptian government. Thus, the SNL was not supportive of the prospect of an independent Somaliland and/or Somali Republic within the Commonwealth. Most important, the NUF and SNL conceived the question of unification differently. Where the NUF promoted unconditional unification with Somalia to be reached as soon as independence was granted, the SNL had a more cautious attitude and promoted a unification to be reached through negotiations between the two political leaderships.<sup>60</sup> A missed dialogue between the two parties came to be detrimental for Somaliland as it pursued the goal of unification with no clear scheme.

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<sup>59</sup> Interview with Edna Adan, 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2009, Hargeysa.

<sup>60</sup> Author unknown, ‘Extract Somaliland Political Summary’, November 1959; in TNA, CO, 1015/2481.

From another point of view, this rush into unification precluded opportunities of negotiating the issue with the Somali Legislative Assembly in Mogadishu and led the latter to impose its leadership. The creation of the Cameroon Federal Republic in 1961 following the unification of British-ruled West Cameroon and French-ruled East Cameroon makes a good comparison with the case study under investigation. When drafting plans for the unification, the respective leading parties failed to address issues related to institutional integration precluding the establishment of clear plans for the federation. The result was that the political leadership from East Cameroon, which had clearer ideas on the issue, managed to impose their vision of a strong and centralised state system as a model for the federal republic.<sup>61</sup> Similarly, the urgency towards unification led the political leadership in British Somaliland to discard issues related to terms and conditions to be discussed with their counterpart in *Somalia Italiana*. The result was that the centralised and autocratic state system crafted during AFIS became the model for the Somali Republic. Significantly, and differently from Cameroon, the unification of Somalia and Somaliland did not take the form of federation but of ‘amalgamation’ indicating the role of subordination played by Somaliland in the whole process. In this way, the state model and governing bodies crafted during AFIS were imposed on Somaliland.

On a different level, the institutional arrangements of the unification became a matter of controversy. A first problem arose around the share of representation within the unified parliament. In fact, instead of favouring an equal share of parliamentary seats, the two assemblies, the one elected in the protectorate with 33 seats, and the other elected in the trust region with 90 seats, simply merged one to another. This clearly disadvantaged the political representation of Somaliland which was reduced to a tiny minority within the parliament.<sup>62</sup> A second issue was

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<sup>61</sup> On the Cameroon Federal Republic see: Willard R. Johnson, *The Cameroon Federation: Political Integration in a Fragmentary Society*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970); Victor T. Le Vine, *The Cameroon Federal Republic*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press: 1971).

<sup>62</sup> According to British sources, Mohamed Haji Ibrahim Egal, leader of SNL, did not support the amalgamation of the two assemblies into one but advanced the idea that the future Somali Parliament had to result from equal number of seats of the two regions. As reported by the British administration in Somaliland: ‘He [Mohamed Haji Ibrahim Egal] showed intense dislike of any idea of federation and he reacted strongly against any merging of the two Governments and legislatures into one because this country would then be in a weak position over negotiations for future Constitution. It is clear that

represented by the fact that the two assemblies were elected through different procedures and voting systems. The 1959 election in Somalia was based on universal suffrage which included men and women. By contrast, only men voted in Somaliland in February 1960.<sup>63</sup>

The role of subordination given to the representatives of Somaliland within the institutional practicalities of the unification reflected the ruling trend that was consolidating in the trust region. As the previous chapter discussed, once the leadership of the Somali Youth League amassed majority within the governing bodies, it used its position to curb internal dissent and opposition. At a second stage, however, it was forced to engage in dialogue with the leadership of the opposition, leading some opponents to join the League. A similar policy was adopted during the unification process. As the opposition within *Somalia Italiana* was excluded from accessing the governing and decision-making bodies, autocratic measures were taken to preclude the political leadership of British Somaliland to advance claims over the 'gate'. Once again, the case of the drafting of the Constitutional Chart is telling of this trend. The previous chapter discussed the ways in which the Somali-led government acted to preclude possibilities of confrontation between the majority and opposition parties when drafting the constitutional framework of the post-colonial state. Dialogue with the SNL or the NUF on the constitution were excluded on the ground that the leadership of the Somali Youth League claimed to be politically more 'advanced' than their counterparts in the protectorate. This assumption was reported by the British Consul in Mogadishu while commented on the work on the Somali constitution of the Legislative Assembly:

I was assured only last night by an influential official in the Somali Government that the Somalis of Somaliland were so backward that they would have no option but to accept the leadership of Somalis from Somalia for an initial period.<sup>64</sup>

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he wishes to negotiate as an equal.' Sir D. Hall, Inward Telegram to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 13th April, 1960, Somaliland, no. 223; in 'UK Policy in Somaliland and Horn of Africa Region: Union with Italian Trusteeship of Somalia', TNA, CO 1015/2518.

<sup>63</sup> Cabdirisaaq Caqli, 'Somaliland Election Registration Pauses Continuing for 50 Years and the New Stimulation to Implement Modern Registration', unpublished. Courtesy of the author.

<sup>64</sup> A. C. Kendall, British Consulate General, Mogadishu, 6<sup>th</sup> April 1959; in TNA, FO 371/138347.

Chatterjee's formulation of dual nationalism is once more useful to understand what the League's leadership meant by being politically 'advanced' or 'backward'. Following the imposition of plans for decolonisation by the UN, nationalists were forced to engage with colonial rule within its own domain. As chapter four illustrated, this shift became concrete with the Italian strategies to amass consent that addressed political leadership with the establishment of scholarship programme that would qualify Somalis to access institutional posts. Political leadership accepted to engage with AFIS as a means through which claiming their share within the making of the new state and entering the 'gate'. Once this leadership became knowledgeable of the institutional framework of AFIS, or politically 'advanced', they were appointed to key state posts and governing bodies as the legislative assemblies.

However, this shift happened at a crucial time in *Somalia Italiana*. Self-government was introduced at a time when institutional structures of the state were still evolving and the 'Somalisation' of the state not completed yet. In this way, following the 1956 election of a Legislative Assembly which was in charge of domestic affairs, the League's leadership came to lead the process of state-craft and the appointment of institutional posts. Due to its position of predominance within governing bodies, this leadership was, thus, in the position to decide who would be included or excluded from accessing the 'gate'. This attitude to dominion, or 'culture of power', which derived from the ways in which state-craft was imposed and articulated, was used to deal with internal and external competitors to the gate.

At the same time, due to great emphasis placed on the electoral process, the leadership in power had to rely constantly on support from the electorate highlighting a tension between the autocratic attitude to dominion and the democratic setting of the state system. This tension was overcome by the League's leadership by engaging in dialogues with opposition leaders locally and on a national level. As discussed, this attitude led several sections of the opposition to merge with the League before the elections. Moreover, by appointing opposition leaders to key institutional posts, the ruling party was also able to attract these key figures, and their electoral weight, within the majority. Following the 1960 unification, the Somali state 'gate' came to be dependent on the support from Somaliland's electorate. In order to secure this



support, the League's leadership engaged in dialogue with the political leaders of Somaliland. As a result, many members of the SNL and NUF joined the League in the 1960s.<sup>65</sup>

Within this context, political propaganda came to play a significant role. In particular, it was used to counter the contenders to the gate. As discussed in the previous chapter, the rhetoric of the 'fight against clan divisions' became a means through which discrediting the opposition in Somalia. Similarly, the project of Greater Somalia became a means through which excluding external competitors from the domain of the state. Moreover, a monopolisation of the national project aimed at preventing competitors to ally with one other. Due to the pressures deriving from the revival of the project of Greater Somalia, the leadership of the Somali Youth League appropriated the nationalist project in order to establish a more direct control on the issue. It did so by founding a new nationalist organisation, namely the Pan-Somali Movement. However, after gaining credits from this organisation, the League's leadership sabotaged the whole project.

## 6.4 Reviving and monopolising the idea of Greater Somalia

In discussing the establishment of self-government, this study illustrated how competition for key institutional posts became central in Somalia. It also discussed the measures taken by the League's leadership to amass majority and to enforce a solid control over state hierarchies. As self-government was introduced when the process of state-building was still evolving, ensuring access to key positions became important to control who would share power and resources and who would be excluded from them. Demands for political unification coming from the protectorate became, in this sense, problematic to the League's leadership as they raised the possibilities of sharing the control of key institutional positions and amplified the struggle for the 'gate' including new contenders. These demands arose in a context of increasing pressures from below. As argued, new students' movements in Cairo

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<sup>65</sup> See Bulhan, *Politics of Cain*, pp. 78-110.

made good use of the rhetoric of the idea of Greater Somalia in order to pressurise the leadership in Mogadishu to make concrete steps towards national unification. As a response, the League took the lead on the project of Great Somalia and promoted the formation of a Pan-Somali Movement which would work on the issue. However, this was directed to ensure solid control on both the processes of state and nation buildings.

The League's leadership operated in particular circumstances. In addition to the demands for unification and the revival of the project of Greater Somalia, the League's leadership was heavily influenced by its relations with both the British and Italian governments. None of the two administrations approved a revival of the irredentist claims which would complicate the state of affairs within international relations. The influences of the British and Italian positions should be not underestimated as the economic future of the Somali Republic was dependant on aids coming from former colonial rules, Italy chiefly. The following quote, an extract of a report on discussions held between the British Consul in Mogadishu and the president of Legislative Assembly, Aden Abdullah, captures the delicate situation in which the political leadership operated. The object of discussion is the formation of the Pan-Somali Movement and the revival of the project of Greater Somalia. During the meeting, the Consul expressed concern on both issues and asked reassurance that they would not constitute a threat to the territorial status quo in the Horn of Africa. By reassuring the British government that plans were issued to keep the matter under control, Aden Abdullah also noted certain difficulties and pressures which were upon the Legislative Assembly:

Aden Abdullah, President of Legislative Assembly...said that he wanted to give an unequivocal assurance to Her Majesty's Government that the Pan Somali National Movement...would not indulge in subversion in the neighbouring territory and that the Somali Government had in no way changed its policy on the Greater Somali issue. He pointed out that having a permanent secretariat of this movement in Mogadishu rather than somewhere else would be a guarantee that it would not fall into the hands of extremists...Aden Abdullah insisted that the aims of the movement were legitimate and that no Somali Government could survive which ignored the strength of feeling on this issue. The Movement would use

propaganda and persuasion to draw world opinion to the wish of all Somalis to be united. It would not go any further than this.<sup>66</sup>

It seems possible to speculate that the more pressures from below and from other parties increased, the less committed to national issues the League became. As the trajectory towards unification seemed irreversible, the League adopted a line which would monopolise the project of Greater Somalia and dismiss other parties from the national domain. The first action towards this goal was to downplay the enthusiasm for the campaign for unification, and to minimise the role played by Somaliland and by its political leadership. This was achieved by controlling media information, in particular through the government-controlled newspaper *Il Corriere della Somalia* which gave little space to the matter as a whole. For instance, when a delegation of the SNL visited Mogadishu to hold talks with the Legislative Assembly in December 1959, the newspaper published the news two weeks later.<sup>67</sup> In fact, once the arrival of this delegation was acknowledged by the newspaper, no details were given on the meeting and discussion held with representatives of the Legislative Assembly.<sup>68</sup>

This neglect reflected the strategy at curbing dissent adopted by the government when dealing with domestic affairs. In establishing a centralised, autocratic position within governing bodies, Somalia's political leadership prevented opposition from consolidating its positions and the government's propaganda ridiculed claims and policies of the opposition accordingly. A similar strategy was adopted when dealing with the political leadership of Somaliland. As a consequence, on the one hand, the government's propaganda attempted to downplay the political

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<sup>66</sup> Consul General (name unknown), telegram n.202 to FO, Mogadishu, 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1959, ref. n. JG/0112/8, in 'Political Relations between Somalia and Somaliland Protectorate', TNA, FO, 371/138348.

<sup>67</sup> So the British Consulate in Mogadishu: 'it is normal for the "Corriere" to publish the news of arrivals of important visitors and delegations as they occur. In this instance, however, no mention was made of the S.N.L. delegation until they had been in Mogadishu for over a fortnight.' (Author unknown), British Consulate General, Mogadishu, 15<sup>th</sup> January 1959, ref. n. JG/019/1, in 'Proposed Formation of Greater Somalia', TNA, FO, 371/138346.

<sup>68</sup> The report continues: 'The "Corriere" normally reports receptions given by the Prime Minister and the President of the Legislative Assembly to visiting delegations, etc., while in this particular instance no such receptions have been reported and even the attached article refers in the vaguest terms to the delegation having had "contacts with members of the Government and with the leaders of the various political parties." Ibid..

activities in the protectorate, on the other, it showed contempt for their poor achievements. For instance, news of the national election held in the protectorate were not reported by the government media which, instead, spread false misinformation:

[...]the General Elections in British Somaliland passed without any notice being taken of them by the Press or Radio in Somalia. On the contrary, prominence was given in the “Corriere della Somalia”[...] to a report from Jibuti [Djibouti] stating categorically that the Elections had been postponed for a while due to the success of the boycott campaign of the National Somali League. In spite of the fact that... the Jibuti message was a fabrication, no denial was published and, when the Elections were held, no reference was or has since been made to them by the Somalia Government...<sup>69</sup>

On a different level, the League adopted a series of defamation campaigns to counter the opposition constituted by the political leaders of the various political organisations. In this sense, the League’s strategy attempted to prevent a political alliance between the opposition leaders. In constructing local backing, the League created a new organisation, the Pan-Somali Movement. At the same time, the Movement was sabotaged by the League’s leadership who blamed the opposition leaders.

#### **6.4.1 Manipulation and monopolisation of Greater Somalia: the case of the Pan-Somali Movement**

The case of the Pan-Somali Movement is exemplary of the ways through which the ‘verticalisation’ of the Somali political space by AFIS reached its completion. Chapter four investigated what were the vertical features of state-craft by reviewing institutional structures and governing bodies, and the previous chapter explored how this ‘verticalisation’ affected the process of state building following the establishment of self-government in 1956. This section looks at how this ‘verticalisation’ came to comprise the domain of nation building by considering the formation, use, and sabotage of the movement.

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<sup>69</sup> A. C. Kendall, British Consulate in Mogadishu, 6<sup>th</sup> April 1959; in TNA, FO, 371/138347.

The formation of the Pan-Somali Movement in 1959 was the League's response to the revival of the project of Greater Somalia. As seen in section 6.3, although the actual practicalities were discarded and in spite of the scepticism of the League on the matter, unification seemed incumbent and grass-roots support solid. The reaction of the League's leadership to these pressures was to use and monopolise the issue of unification as a proof of its success and commitment to the idea Greater Somalia. This propaganda addressed *Somalia Italiana* first, where, as discussed in the last chapter, the party had to face internal criticism on the scarce development of national politics. On a different level, the League's role of predominance within the process of unification was propagandised within the Somali-speaking regions.<sup>70</sup> Accordingly, the League promoted the foundation of a new political association, the Pan-Somali Movement which would work at the national project of Greater Somalia. This represented a turning point on the issue which had been put aside since the late 1940s. The event was also embedded and charged with solemnity and symbolism. Evocatively, with the emergence of the Pan-Somali Movement in 1959, the idea of Great Somalia was re-launched from where it originated, *Somalia Italiana*, and led by its original promoter, the Somali Youth League.<sup>71</sup>

The Movement was founded in Mogadishu in August 1959 to function as an umbrella organisation that would bring together representatives of political organisations from the Somali-speaking regions to work collaboratively on the project of Greater Somalia. A great deal of publicity was given to the event by the local newspaper, *Il Corriere della Somalia*. Its first meeting was attended by political representatives of the five Somali-speaking regions (although not by representatives of all political parties). Among these representatives, three parties claimed to be the promoters of the Movement: the Somali Youth League of *Somalia Italiana*, the Somali National League of British Somaliland, the *Union Démocratique Somalis* of Djibouti. It was maintained that the national project would be advanced through the

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<sup>70</sup> Author unknown, 'Minutes of the Discussions held by the Legislative Assembly', 6<sup>th</sup> November 1958, Mogadishu. ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 9, busta 4.

<sup>71</sup> This discourse characterised the tones used by *Il Corriere della Somalia*.

Movement as it was a collective organ consisting of political representation of all Somali-speaking regions.

In spite of these aims, the Movement was a short-lived digression in Somalia's national politics. Following its formation the Movement was characterised by competition among its three founding parties each pursuing different scopes. For instance, the Somali National League used the Movement to gain consensus for the political election of February 1960 in opposition to the NUF; the *l'Union Démocratique Somalis* aimed instead to get credits within the international community as it was excluded from top-level politics in Djibouti. Conversely, the Somali Youth League used the Movement to get a strong hold in the domain of Greater Somalia. Due to its control over governing bodies and media, the Somali Youth League was more successful in the competition. In fact, in spite of the League's active role in organising the Movement, it deliberately prevented the organisation from making any progress at all.

Once more, Cooper's theorisation of the 'gatekeeper state' as a part of the colonial legacy constitutes a useful tool for appreciating this issue. By necessity, the 'gatekeeper state' is the domain of a few who seek control of key posts and institutions. Due to this exclusive character, it reduced politics to a zero-sum political competition. The gate state-system emerging from the trusteeship was in contradiction with the collective national project of Greater Somalia. This thesis addressed this tension by confronting the horizontal features of the Somali nation imagined in the 1940s and the vertical institutional structures imposed by AFIS to support this nation. This contradiction came to light fully when in the late 1950s a series of pressures led to a revival of talks about the project of Greater Somalia. In establishing the Pan-Somali Movement, it was created a fake collegial organ whose domain was, instead, very exclusive.

An analysis of the propaganda used by the Government-controlled newspaper *Il Corriere della Somalia* sheds light on how competition expanded and developed within the area of Greater Somalia. On August, 31 1959, *Il Corriere* reported with enthusiasm the news of the formation of the Movement whose aims were the

achievement of independence and unity of the ‘Somali territories’,<sup>72</sup> the abolishment of racial and clan divisions, and the promotion of links with African and Muslim countries.<sup>73</sup> Although these aims did not differ from the objectives of most parties at the time, the newspaper’s propaganda centred on the fact that, for the first time, thanks to the Movement representatives from within the area of Greater Somalia gathered officially together in order to discuss the issue. On this ‘extraordinary’ occasion, the role played by the League was highlighted and presented as one of its greatest achievements.<sup>74</sup>

The core claim of this propaganda reflected the comments of the League’s main leaders. For instance, the themes of continuity with the past, Somali success, optimism and faith towards the future were expressed by the then President of the Legislative Assembly, Aden Abdullah Osman:

With no doubt and with God’s help we will achieve our goals... we have to strive for the union of Somalis as well as all Somalis have to be united. Therefore I ask the present company to stress the historical importance of the event today in here as well as in the other Somali regions.

However, it was stressed that all the credits for the event lied with the League. In this sense, the Somali Youth League was depicted as the original promoter of nationalism, the success of Somali politics and the hope for the future of Somali people. In other words it represented the past, present and future of Somali nationalism. The declaration of the president Sheikh Issa Mohamed made this point very clear:

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<sup>72</sup> According to the statute of the Pan-Somali Movement: ‘the expression ‘Somali Territories’ as herewith intended comprises the regions of East Africa starting North with the French Somaliland, bordering southward with Kenya and westward with Ethiopia notoriously inhabited by that indivisible ethnical, political and religious unity called Somali and universally known as the Horn of Africa’. Author unknown, ‘Note on the Pan-Somali Movement’, undated; ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 9, busta 2.

<sup>73</sup> The aims of the Pan-Somali Movement were: ‘to achieve, through peaceful and legal means, the Unity and Independence of all Somali Territories; to reject categorically whatsoever from tribal and/or racial division, be it influenced by [S]omali elements or by foreigners; to create and maintain close relations with the people of [A]frican continent; to create and maintain links with the people of Moslem World.’ Ibid..

<sup>74</sup> *Il Corriere della Somalia*, 31<sup>st</sup> August 1959.

God has made our path towards independence easier. In that today we hold our destinies in our own hands and control them, but our expectations won't be satisfied until the unification of Somali-lands will be achieved. Our duty is to help our brothers that are not free yet and we will devote ourselves with everything and every skills so that the day of the great union, of which the party I represent has always been the standard-bearer, can happen as soon as possible.<sup>75</sup>

At the same time, the leadership attempted to contain the enthusiasm and to post-pone concrete discussions on the issue after independence. As confirmed by the first President of the Legislative Assembly, Abdullahi Issa:

We are strongly convinced of the necessity of the unification. We don't want anything outside our rights... the end of the Trusteeship System is very near... as soon as the independence will be granted we could devote ourselves to the achievement of this other goal with more intensity.<sup>76</sup>

This last quote captures the scarce commitment of the party's leadership to the actual project and its unwillingness to negotiate issues and share key competences. In fact, as soon as it was time to discuss terms and conditions, the whole project was boycotted.

In spite of the great deal of publicity, the Pan-Somali Movement did not make any progress at all: its second meeting, scheduled for December 1959, was replaced by a 'pre-congress' whose aims were 'exclusively organisational and preparatory for the Congress'.<sup>77</sup> However, once the pre-congress was held, it lasted four days during which none of the issues on the agenda was discussed,<sup>78</sup> the President of the Movement resigned as a protest, and all the questions concerning the Movement, the Congress and Somali nationalism were postponed to an indeterminate future. In explaining the lack of progress, the *Corriere* blamed clan rivalries among parties which, it was maintained, were 'deeply in contract with the aims of

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<sup>75</sup> All the quotes are taken from *Il Corriere della Somalia*, 31<sup>st</sup> August 1959.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> The Administrator's Cabinet, Telegram to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 26<sup>th</sup> December 1959, Mogadishu. ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 9, busta 2.

<sup>78</sup> The main points on the pre-congress agenda were the following: admission of new parties; enlargement of the temporary Committee; nomination of new offices and confirmation of old offices. *Ibid.*



Movement since its foundation'.<sup>79</sup> It was implicitly suggested that clan rivalries were specific features of other parties constituting a crucial point of the government's propaganda. As the previous chapter illustrated, following the establishment of self-government, the rhetoric of the eradication of clan divisions was used to ridicule the opposition. In the doing so, this discourse made a clear-cut divide between the 'national' party and the 'tribal' movements, the 'good' and the 'bad', respectively 'us' (i.e. the League) and 'them' (i.e. the other parties). Similar methods were adopted by the newspaper to blame other political organisations for the failure of the Movement.

Archival findings provide more insights on the reasons behind the sabotage of the Movement and the League's unwillingness to confront with its colleagues. First, certain questions arose following international pressures from British, Ethiopian and Italian governments which did not support the revival of the project of Greater Somalia.<sup>80</sup> Consequentially, as *Somalia Italiana* was close to independence and subject to economic links with Italy, the League proposed to postpone any discussion on the issue. As this was opposed by other parties, the League's reaction was to sabotage the Movement.

Second, considerable competition among different leaders developed within the Movement underscoring clashes between different positions, in particular between the provisional president of the Movement Mohamed Harbi and the League's leadership. Although excluded from top-level politics in Djibouti, Mohamed Harbi enjoyed a certain solid backing within the Movement. He was eager to hold an official meeting in December so that he could attend the meeting of the Organisation of African Union in 1960 as representative of all Somali-speaking regions. His position within the Movement was challenged by the League's leadership leading to scheduling a 'pre-congress' on the 31<sup>st</sup> December with no

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<sup>79</sup> The *Corriere della Somalia* published a concise press release to acknowledge the negatives outcomes of the Pan-Somali Movement pre-congress. The Administrator's Cabinet, Telegram to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 5<sup>th</sup> January 1960, Mogadishu, n. 500130; ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 9, busta 2.

<sup>80</sup> Italian sources suggest that the Somali Youth League preferred to hinder the growth of the Movement especially due to pressures coming from international community. At the same time, the government and press strongly criticised the event. Ibid..

political agenda. At the same time, dispositions were issued for *Il Corriere della Somalia*, to dedicate little space and importance to the pre-congress and to the whole issue.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, although not specified, measures were taken to prevent supporters of Mohamed Harbi to reach Mogadishu 'on time' and make it to the pre-congress.<sup>82</sup>

A third issue was constituted by the competition among different groups in particular between the SNL and the Somali Youth League the foremost parties of Somalia and Somaliland.<sup>83</sup> As they were both engaging in a competition over the 'gate', the idea of Greater Somalia and the Pan-Somali Movement became other domains of conflicts. Accordingly, their competitions developed at three different levels within the Movement: to advance their positions and grass-roots backing; to exclude opposition from taking advantage and/or to participate at the Movement; finally, to support their competitors' opposition respectively (the SNL engaged in dialogue with the Great Somalia League, whereas the Somali Youth League became close to the NUF).<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> 'No publicity will be given to the pre-congress discussion by the Government and by its organ of information (*Corriere della Somalia*) [it will be given notice of] the agenda and of the conclusions [of the pre-congress only].' The Administrator's Cabinet, Telegram to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 5<sup>th</sup> January 1960, Mogadishu, n. 500130; ASDMAE, carteggio AFIS, cassa 9, busta 2.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.. From colonial sources, it is possible to speculate that Mohamoud Harbi managed to amass considerable backing in Djibouti. In the 1960s, he continued to put the issue of Greater Somalia forward before the international community, however he soon died in a crash on a small plane of the United Arab Airlines from Geneva to Cairo, on September, 29 1960. See <http://aviation-safety.net/database/record.php?id=19600929-0>

<sup>83</sup> As reported by the British Consulate in Mogadishu, after the formation of the Pan-Somali Movement, the leadership of the League began to engage more critically with the politics in the protectorate and in particular with the leadership of the SNL. For instance, in December 1959, the president of the Legislative Assembly, Aden Abdullah Osman authored a piece published in the *Corriere della Somalia* in which he criticised the *Horn of Africa* the SNL-controlled magazine. This caused a certain concern on the development of the relations between the two parties: 'While it is generally accepted that the Somali Government is more friendly to the Protectorate's National United Front, (N.U.F.), this attack on the S.N.L. caused considerable surprise since hitherto the Somali Government had made an effort to display a degree of impartiality with regard to the Protectorate's internal affairs.' (Author unknown), British Consulate-General, Mogadishu, 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1959, JG/0112/13; in TNA, FO 371/138348.

<sup>84</sup> The leadership of the Somali Youth League became closer to the leader of the NUF, Michael Mariano, whose party competed with the SNL for political election in Somaliland scheduled in February 1960. When Michael Mariano paid a visit to the Assembly: 'He was given the full V.I.P. treatment, being received at the Airport by an imposing delegation headed by Aden Abdullah and the Minister of Public Works and Communications, Mohamed Abdi Nur. Mariano was installed in the visitors' quarters of the Assembly and was given an immediate audience with the Prime Minister which lasted over two hours.' Ibid..

Conflicts assumed grotesque features. In a desperate attempt to prevent opposition from joining the Movement, the League made last-minute changes on terms and conditions of the membership with no public notification. However, the secretary of the Movement, who belonged to a competing group, was able to sabotage the League's plot and to allow opposition to be able to meet the new requirements on time:

An arrangement was made whereby political parties which did not submit their official application before December 13, to take part in the Congress would be excluded. This would have eliminated the three Somali opposition parties: Great Somalia league (G.S.L.), Somali National Union (S.N.U.) and the Independent Constitutional Party, (H.D.M.S.), leaving the Somali Youth League, (S.Y.L.) in effective control<sup>85</sup>

Within this zero-sum game in which competitors' gains were matched by equal losses, the immediate consequence was that discussions of the idea of Greater Somalia did not make any progress at all.<sup>86</sup>

## 6.5 Conclusion

The previous chapter investigated the effects of the decolonisation programme on state-building and everyday politics and illustrated how the introduction of self-government led to the establishment of a one-party system in which the majority acted to ensure and amass control over governing institutions and structures of state power. This chapter assessed the effects of the process of decolonisation on Somali unification and, more generally, on the nationalist project of Greater Somalia.

In many ways, the effects of decolonisation on the national project were similar. The state became a very exclusive domain and its institution were crafted according to centralised, autocratic features and based on vertical ties. The top-level

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<sup>85</sup> (Author unknown), British Consulate-General, Mogadishu, 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1959, JG/0112/13; in TNA, FO 371/138348.

<sup>86</sup> Paradoxically, as the British Consulate put it, the Somali Youth League preferred to sabotage the whole Movement rather than contributing to its development. This attitude created a fracture inside the Movement: 'The prospect of not having a comfortable majority at the Congress caused Abdullahi Issa to arrange for a postponement of the Congress. This infuriated Yusuf Ismail Samatar who returned to Hargeisa [Hargeysa] on December 16, promising not to return until such time as the Somali Government makes its peace with the S.N.L.' Ibid..

hierarchies, at first appointed by AFIS and from 1956 onwards by Somali-led governments, were invested with the arbitrary power to include who would access power and who would not. The idea of Greater Somalia, which formerly symbolised a collective dream of territorial unification based on horizontal fraternity, was appropriated by a political leadership whose tight control made the whole project very exclusive. The case of the Pan-Somali Movement, the ways through which it was created, propagandised and sabotaged illustrated this process of manipulation clearly. Due to a series of pressures from below and pressures from external competitors to the 'gate' represented by the emerging Somali state, the leadership of the Somali Youth League took the lead of the movement in order to make sure that it would not share its position of power with other counterparts.

Once the League's leadership managed to consolidate its position outside *Somalia Italiana*, and confirmed its hold to power, political competitors had no other choice than accessing state institutions within the League rather than opposing it. As seen in the previous chapter, the autocratic policy adopted by the League's leadership towards opposition pushed political competitors to merge within the ruling party. It was not a case that this trend was reported just before the 1959 national election when, due to coercive measures adopted by the League to curb dissent, it became clear that the opposition had little chance to claiming its share of the gate through the 'legal' means planned by AFIS, i.e. electoral competition. Similarly, once the unification of Somalia and Somaliland marked a clear role of subordination of the latter, the political leadership of the SNL and NUF adopted a similar strategy to the one of the HDM, they joined the League with the aim to advance their interests and obtain their share within governing structures.

In analysing this process, the chapter has made recurrent reference to Cooper's formulation of the 'gatekeeper' state because it provides useful tool for understanding the importance given to political competition for accessing the state that characterised Somali politics since the 1950s and eventually 1960s. This emphasis had origins in the decolonising programme planned by AFIS which placed great emphasis on elections and electoral competitions, and constructed verticalised state structures designed to give predominance to the top-hierarchies. Moreover, the chapter has also argued that different decolonisation programmes within Somali-

speaking regions contributed to foster pressures from below within the area of Greater Somalia. AFIS and its commitment to a development programme placed the former Italian colony at the centre of attraction and its state object of desire to different groups. This, coupled with adjustments of colonial arrangements within the areas, as the cession of Haud and RA, caused an expansion of the struggle for the gate which came to include competitors from outside *Somalia Italiana*.

The way in which the unification was achieved is a key feature of contemporary debate in Somaliland. The literature in support for international recognition for the Republic of Somaliland contests the fact that the two former colonial possessions did not negotiate the issue of political unification as equals.<sup>87</sup> As discussed in the chapter, the role of subordination given to Somaliland within the union and process of unification is attributable to the League's unwillingness to share state control with its counterpart and to poor planning carried out by Somaliland's political leadership.

The chapter argued that due to a sense of increasing insecurity around domestic and foreign affairs, Somaliland's political leadership rushed into 'unconditional amalgamation' failing to discuss issues related to the process of unification within Somaliland and with Somalia. Classic approaches to the comprehension of political unification argue that the presence of an external threat (or the prospect of future aggression) is the main push for two, or more than two, territorial entities to merge into one.<sup>88</sup> The role played by the tension over border issues should be not underestimated. It was this tension to lead both the SNL and the NUF supporting the creation of a strong, centralised and unified government instead of a federal state with regional autonomy.<sup>89</sup> From this perspective, all parties agreed that a centralised government would constitute the best security from external threats. The presence of a constant tension with neighbouring countries is a key feature of post-colonial Somali history setting the background to multiple armed conflicts with neighbouring countries.

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<sup>87</sup> Caqli, 'Somaliland Election Registration'.

<sup>88</sup> Riker 'Federalism: Origin'.

<sup>89</sup> In fact the only party who supported a federal Somali state was the HDM which represented the southern clans, mostly sedentary and semi-pastoral.

The struggle for the ‘gate’ among political competitors soon led irredentist aspirations and optimistic expectations to disillusionment. Already in 1961, a referendum held to abrogate the Constitution of the Somali Republic was approved with strong rejection in Somaliland, and only passed because the votes were counted all together. Soon after, a military coup was organised by young military officials in Hargeysa. One of these officials, who was interviewed for this research, claimed that the main scope of the coup was to raise awareness among central government in Mogadishu that terms and conditions of the unification had to be re-negotiated.<sup>90</sup> These claims were never addressed.

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<sup>90</sup> Interview with Hussein Ali Duale ‘Awil’, 12<sup>th</sup> August, 2009, Hargeysa.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

In 1992, in one of his last, and perhaps most provoking and controversial, contributions to African studies, Basil Davidson confronts the system of nation-state with the charge of having imposed an alien and disruptive political model upon African countries. Enforced as a part of the colonial heritage, the system of nation-state has ‘cursed’ Africa to socioeconomic underdevelopment and political instability and precluded the establishment of African-rooted alternatives to this model. In considering the collapse of Somalia, he notes that:

Somalia by 1990 had ceased even to be a nation-state; nothing seemed to remain save clan warfare and destruction. Yet it could not be said that Somalia’s brief attempt to follow “the route of escape” had failed for reasons inherent to itself: in this sense, rather, the attempt had succeeded. But the circumstances in which it could persist and mature were simply not present.<sup>1</sup>

Although subject to critiques, Davidson’s argument addresses core issues regarding the history and recent development of Somali politics. To what extent did the imposition of the system of nation-state contribute to ‘Somalia’s self-destruction’?<sup>2</sup> What were the features, claims and activities of the Somali ‘route of escape’? More important, what were the historical conditions and possibilities? How did the two interrelate with each other?

This study began with the intention to explore the process of the making of nation-state in Somalia. The reasons for doing so were simple. While the dissolution of the Somali nation-state has fostered a lively scholarly debate on the dynamics of dissolution and prospects for future reconstructions, the ways in which this system was crafted were under-explored. Nevertheless, a first-hand historically grounded investigation was needed to provide more insight to this problematic, contributing to a deeper understanding of the patterns of political development in Somalia.

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<sup>1</sup> Basil Davidson, *The Black Man’s Burden. Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State*, (London: Verso, 1992), p. 310.

<sup>2</sup> The expression is taken from an account of recent political development by a former Somali diplomat: Mohamed Osman Omar, *The Road to Zero: Somalia’s Self-Destruction: Personal Reminiscences*, (London: Haan Associates, 1992).

The research investigated the interplay between nationalism and decolonisation or, to use Davidson's wording, the interaction between the Somali-rooted 'route of escape' and the set of historical and structural circumstances. The period under investigation coincided with a change of regime following the defeat of the Italians in 1941 in the Horn of Africa. This phase was characterised by the emergence of a national movement that began to address the wartime challenges by imagining home-grown alternatives. In addition to this, a debate in the UN raised the possibility of self-government and independence scheduling a fixed programme of social, economic and political development. This study investigated the ways in which the decolonisation process came to terms with the Somali nationalist movement determining modes and patterns of the post-colonial state. The findings illustrated how the peculiarities of the decolonisation process led to a 'verticalisation' of Somali political space. This meant, the institutional framework crafted during the international trusteeship was not only in stark contrast to the Somali-rooted alternatives emerging in the wartime, but it established a distorted version of the 'western' nation-state ambivalently 'modern' and 'traditional'.

The research findings make a significant contribution to Somali studies. Despite different theoretical approaches have emerged over the last decades, a general consensus among scholars tends to agree that the system of nation-state imposed in Somalia was an inadequate western imposition oblivious of the peculiarities of the Somali social structure.<sup>3</sup> By proving a more historically informed scrutiny, this thesis challenged these assumptions for being too simplistic. It was demonstrated how the institutional framework established in support of the Somali nation was, in fact, a distorted version of the western nation-state. The research expressed this tension by exploring the features of the decision-making bodies established by AFIS, including the electoral procedures and the representative councils and demonstrated how these created an ambivalent ruling system, both 'modern' and 'traditional'. An appreciation of this circumstance is important for

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<sup>3</sup> This position is also shared by some journalist who critically addressed international intervention in Somalia. See for instance Harper's recent contribution to the debate: Mary Harper, *Getting Somalia Wrong? Faith and Hope in a Shattered State*, (Zed Press, 2012).



those studies concerned with the relations between state, society and tradition in Somalia, as well as for the ones researching Somali nationalism and national politics. In investigating the historical trajectory leading to independence, this research provided insight to better understand the *longue durée* of Somali politics.

In particular, the thesis emphasised the importance of approaching the issue of Somali nationalism in historical perspective. In explaining the disintegration of the Somali nation-state, Schraeder has recently revised the issue of Somali nationalism. His argument contended that the interplay between clan rivalries and self-interested elites prevented the post-colonial state from performing effectively. From this perspective, he concluded that ‘a true, populist-based Somali nationalism was never born. Somali leaders...[were incapable] to promote a pan-Somali nationalism truly capable of overcoming clan-based differences.’<sup>4</sup> Although compelling, this perspective runs the risk of being ahistorical. By contrast, this study has shown the importance of conducting empirically-grounded research on the topic beyond the series of biases of the wartime propaganda which characterise accounts of the early nationalist politics in Somalia. In this way, it was possible to investigate and appreciate the characteristics of the Somali-rooted nationalist trends.

In particular, chapter two underscored how within a context of power vacuum, a powerful movement from below (re)imagined the Somali nation by appropriating certain cultural elements and by ideating new means for promoting the national agenda. This study provided historically informed insights on the activities emerging as a response to a change of regime. In investigating the features and characteristics of the nation imagined in the post-war period, the thesis revealed the features of the trends emerging in the 1940s. The findings are significant as they suggested that modern nationalism was characterised by an inclusive message supported by horizontal links and structures. Appreciating these features, as well as the achievements of local politics, is important because it indicates that external circumstances – i.e. the peculiarities and institutional structures of the decolonisation

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<sup>4</sup> Schraeder, ‘From Irredentism to Secession’, p. 116.

process – need to be taken into account when discussing the ‘failure’ or the ‘limits’ of Somali nationalism.

Attention was turned to the dynamics that determined the patterns of political developments in Somalia. Due to the impact of the War and the change of regime in 1941, the decolonisation of Somalia followed a peculiar trajectory. In particular, the establishment of the UN mandate marked a progressive attitude in addressing the issue of former Italian colonies. As self-government and independence had already been granted in 1949, the UN decision paved the way towards the end of colonial dominion in the Horn of Africa. By contrast, the thesis demonstrated that the progressive attitude of the international community did not come without problems. Already in 1947 the UN adopted a democratic approach to the issue of former Italian colonies by sending a special commission to investigate the aspirations of local communities. This approach was, in fact, very limited. By urging local representatives to express their aspirations, the UN enforced political competition between different groups. Moreover, in investigating these aspirations, the UN divided the local communities into two groups: the ones who were opposed to and the ones who were not opposed to a restoration of Italian rule. It was discussed the implications of this restricted choice for local communities, especially for the ones who had been heavily affected by the war and by the impacts of the military occupation. As a result of the enforcement of competition, the various groups’ interests became politicised and the divide among them intensified.

The limits and contradictions of the UN democratic approach to Somalia contributed even further to the creation of a restricted political space. By analysing the features of the trusteeship administration, the research demonstrated that despite the progressive attitude towards decolonisation of the UN, international approach was negatively affected by the conflicting interests of the Great Powers. As a result, discussions on the modes through which enhancing self-government and democratisation in Somalia were discarded. In this way, the Trusteeship System of the UN was a powerful international body at a nominal level, but it proved to be rather ineffective. Significantly, the System tailored a powerful position for the administrative power which controlled all the practical issues related to the everyday administration. Moreover, the administrative power was made accountable for the

administration but was not compelled by the decisions of the UN. This study discussed the case of the border issue between Ethiopia and Somalia to illustrate how the UN did not have any effective power to make trust powers compelling by international resolutions.

The thesis decided to use the Somali adaptation of the acronym AFIS – ‘we ripped off the indigenous Somalis’ – to emphasise the contradiction laying at the heart of the Trusteeship System. In seeking a solution to the administrative future of Somalia, the UN acted as a third, allegedly ‘neutral’, party mediating between the Somali communities and Italian (colonial) interests. However, the final UN decision to nominate as a trust power Italy became very problematic as it enhanced former colonial interests to the detriment of the political front opposed to Italian rule. In this way, the imposition of the trusteeship was perceived as a ‘rip-off’ as it granted self-government and independence with non-negotiable terms and conditions. The immediate result was that AFIS became less susceptible to the pressures and demands coming from the Somali political leadership. In fact, the latter were forced to engage in dialogue with the trust power according to the requirements and expectations of AFIS. It was seen how this critically affected the relations between AFIS and political leaders, and the political stance of the foremost political party, the Somali Youth League, that assumed pro-Italian features. Overall, the institutional approach to Somali decolonisation created restricted conditions for political action.

This research investigated the consequences that this restricted political space had on the development of local politics. In particular, chapter five unpacked the trajectory of the consolidation of an exclusive, autocratic government (the one-party system government). Once elected to power, the leadership of the Somali Youth League began to engage with the practice of ‘spoils politics’. This was due to a series of circumstances linked to the specific historical and institutional framework of AFIS. The transfer of power from the trust administration to the Somali-led government took place when the process of ‘Somalisation’ of the state was proceeding at full speed. In 1956, the first elected Legislative Assembly inherited a set of structures of power that were in demand of skilled Somalis. For this reason, the first Somali government came to lead the process of ‘Somalisation’ of the state, i.e. the appointment of Somalis to key institutional posts.

This circumstance had several consequences whose appreciation is important for achieving a broader understanding of the development of post-colonial politics. First, the Somali-led government inherited a specific attitude to power, marked by the key positioning of top-hierarchies within the decision-making bodies. Due to the fact that self-government was established at crucial moment of state-crafting, the ruling majority was invested with an exclusive task. The thesis referred to the special position given to the ruling majority as ‘the exclusive power to include.’ This meant, the exclusive power of the ruling majority to allocate nominations for key institutional posts. This research investigated the development of national and municipal elections to demonstrate how the Somali-led governments relied on this exclusive position to curb the opposition (both within and outside the ruling party) and to set the conditions according to which it remained uncontested during the electoral competitions.

On a different level, the exclusive position held within the system of self-government was also used by the ruling leadership to counter the constant electoral pressures. As the thesis illustrated, the democratisation programme placed a great deal of emphasis on the electoral process by scheduling four elections within five years. Pressured by the concerns related to electoral competition, the ruling leadership negotiated a share of key institutional posts with the opposition in return of their electoral backing. In this way, the leadership of the League managed to amass consent in certain areas where the opposition was stronger. It was argued that the strategy of co-opting opposition leaders within the majority necessarily weakened both the majority and minority parties. Moreover, it began the phase of political corruption, clientelage, or ‘prebendalism’ that came to characterise the politics of the Somali Republic.

Another consequence of the introduction of self-government at a crucial moment within the process of democratisation was the great deal of confusion that emerged around concepts such as ‘state’, ‘government’, ‘ruling leadership’ and ‘majority party’. This confusion was detectable from the discussions held by political leaders during the parliamentary sessions. These suggested that the system of self-government was perceived as one monolithic system of power. Although this reflected a general tendency to the consolidation of the One-Party state elsewhere in

Africa, it assumed peculiar features in Somalia. Following the introduction of self-government, the ruling majority did not simply appropriate the structures of power, but it came to play an active role in the process of the construction of these structures. The use of the term ‘Monocolore’, i.e. single-color, by the opposition to point to this process is very telling as it indicated that the institutional framework of Somalia was perceived as a system in which all different structures and bodies were made in the shades of a single colour. Within this ‘Monocolore’ system, the space for political action became very restrictive and subject to the vertical ties established during AFIS. It is, therefore, unsurprising that some leaders of the opposition decided to join the majority in order to access a share of power. Paradoxically, by doing so they contributed to the consolidation of the system of power they had previously rejected.

Within this restrictive political space, a political discourse based on clan came to assume a special significance. The thesis, in particular chapter four, linked the proliferation of clan-based parties that characterised local politics in the 1960s to the electoral procedures adopted by AFIS in the 1950s. It was illustrated how in order to overcome the difficulties in completing a census of the electorate, AFIS relied on both direct and indirect voting methods. In particular, the practices of the indirect voting system centred on clan affiliations. In this way, competition among different groups was placed into the realm of national politics. Further research is needed to investigate the role played by a clan-based discourse by looking at the development of local politics in the 1960s. The thesis suggested that the (re)emergence of a clan-based discourse in Somali politics should be seen as a reaction to the ‘verticalisation’ of the political space. From this perspective, the clan became a means through which challenging the ruling majority and a vehicle for accessing power. Particular attention was given to the manipulation of the clan, or to be more precise, to the use of the rhetoric against clan divisions by the leadership of the League. Future research needs to address the ways in which this rhetoric was perceived from below. Despite a series of problems and limits related to archival sources and to conducting fieldwork in Somalia, future investigation can be based on oral tradition which, for this research as for others, constituted a rich source of information.

A final argument made by this research is that the process of ‘verticalisation’ of the Somali political space affected the process of unification of Somalia and Somaliland in 1960. It was seen how the domain of the national project of Greater Somalia was appropriated by the political leadership while competing for the control of the Somali state. In this way, the ‘verticalisation’ of political space started with the decolonisation process and reached a completion with the unification and the creation of the Somali Republic. The idea of Greater Somalia, once a collective project, became the domain of very few. These findings are important for contemporary debates discussing the issue of international recognition of the *de facto* independent Republic of Somaliland. As the unification is often associated with bitter memories, an investigation of the patterns through which it took shape is important for any future relations between Somalia and Somaliland.

Before ending this research, it is worth asking what lesson can be learnt with respect to the current situation in Somalia. Although lots of things have changed over the last decades, today international community is once more in the position to critically influence future resolutions to the ‘Somali question’. On February 23, 2012, the international community, represented by delegates from over forty governments and multi-lateral organisations including the secretary-general of the UN, attended a conference in London to hold discussions on how to restore peace and security in Somalia. The country has been without an effective central government since 1991 when president Siad Barre was overthrown by rival clans whose leaders, however, in an attempt to prevail on each other, embarked in brutal civil war plunging the country into chaos and clan warfare. At a Peace Conference in Djibouti in 2000, a transitional government (later Transitional Federal Government, TFG) was elected by clan leaders and other key representatives of social and economic groups. The TFG had the task to begin processes of negotiation among the various militias. Despite enjoying the backing of international community, western governments and donors, the TFG has, so far, failed to let the various interested parties agree on each other and to restore peace and stability. As the TFG had no control of the country but was based in Nairobi, its authority was challenged locally by the rise of militant Islamists, the Islamic Courts, which in 2006 managed to establish forms of stability in the south and to defeat the localised power of the

warlords. However, the Islamic Courts were attacked by TFG's forces, backed by Ethiopian troops, causing the insurgence of an even more extremist Islamic group, Al-Shabab. The latter defeated Ethiopian forces and gained control of most of southern Somalia in 2008. Ever since, the TFG has been struggling to establish any credible forms of ruling system in Somalia. In fact, as it exercises effective power in limited areas (which included Mogadishu only recently), Al-Shabab forces continued to control most of the country.

In many ways, the approaches of the international community to Somalia have changed little over the years. As seen for the decolonisation process, the imposition of solutions from-above have shown limited effectiveness. In fact, in the late 1940s these approaches led to a radicalisation of conflicts. On a similar note, recent international interventions contributed to increase the divide among different groups and to exacerbate conflicts. Most notably, the international refusal (i.e. of the United States) to deal with the Union of Islamic Courts, a bottom-up alternative to the lack of a central state that established local security and defeated the warlords' power, led to exacerbation of conflicts and to the emergence of an even more radical organisation. Evidence from this research as well as from recent case studies on Somaliland and Puntland suggests that the bottom-up approaches should be not discarded as they often provide reliable and effective alternatives to state-building.

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### Appendix. List of Interviews

Interview with Anthony Lawrence Scawin, 4<sup>th</sup> December 2008, Wadebridge. Born in 1920, Tony Scawin joined the army acting as major of the Somali Guard Company during the Second World War. He served in the Military Administration in the 1940s and in the Colonial Civil Service in the 1950s, at first as assistant District Commissioner in Burco, and later as District Commissioner in Ceerigaabo and Hargeysa. One of the founder and long-standing member of the Anglo-Somali Society, he died in 2008.

Interview with Abdulkadir Ali Bollay, 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2009, London. Born in the 1930s in Mogadishu, Abdulkadir Ali Bollay is member of the Rer Banaadir community. At a very young age, he became member of the Somali Youth League. After obtaining university education in Italy in the 1950s, he worked as a journalist and acted as Mayor of Mogadishu city council in the 1980s. Currently, he lives in London.

Interview with Mohamed Aden Sheikh, 24<sup>th</sup> April, 2009, Turin. Born in the 1930s, Mohamed Aden Sheikh studied Medicine in Italy. In Somalia, he worked at first as a medical doctor later becoming a politician. He supported the 1969 military coup and was appointed to the Ministry of Health, Culture and Information during the regime of Siad Barre. Due to some disagreements with the regime, he was arrested in the 1970s. Subsequently, he moved to Italy. A well-known and active member of the Somali diaspora in Italy, he acted as director of Centre for African Studies in Turin. He died in October 2010.

Interview with Angelo Del Boca, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2009, Turin. Born in 1925, Angelo Del Boca is an Italian journalist, writer and historian of Italian colonialism, with an interest in the history of Italian colonial empire. As a journalist, he visited Somalia in the 1950s drafting a few reports published by the Turin-based newspaper *Gazzetta del Popolo*.

Interview with Nimco Samater Jama, 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2009, Hargeysa. Born in the 1930s in northwest region of the British Protectorate, Nimco Samater Jama lived from time to time in Hargeysa in the 1950s. A sympathiser of the National United Front, she fervently remembers features, poems and facts related to the local national politics leading to independence. She owns a farm a few kilometres far from Hargeysa.

Interview with Mohamed Barood Ali, 6<sup>th</sup> July 2009, Hargeysa. Born in 1950 (circa) to a nomad family, he grew up in Hargeysa with an aunt. In the 1970s together with other fellows he was involved in some charity activities. For this reason, they were imprisoned and detained for many years under the most miserable conditions by the regime of Siad Barre. His memoirs have been published recently.

Interview with ‘Gahaydhee’, 14<sup>th</sup> July 2009, Hargeysa. Born in 1940 (circa) in the British protectorate, he joined the army in February 1960 and was posted to Hargeysa where he was on duty on the day of independence. In the 1950s, he was a supporter of the National United Front. After independence, he was posted to the south and left the army soon after.

Interview with Ahmed Ali Hibrahim, 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2009, Hargeysa. A Somali elder who was born in the early 1930s in Goryo, a region located western of Hargeysa. During the late

colonial time, he used to go the capital of the protectorate on a regular base. He was a sympathizer of the Somali National League.

Interview with Edna Adan, 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2009, Hargeysa. Born in Hargeysa in the 1930s, Edna Adan was trained as a nurse in the United Kingdom. She married the leader of the Somali National League, Mohamed Haji Ibrahim Egal moving with him to Mogadishu in the late 1960s. After the civil war, she founded the Edna Adan Maternity Hospital in Hargeysa. In the early 2000s, she acted as Somaliland Foreign Minister.

Interview with Mohamed Said Mohamed ‘Gees’, 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2009, Hargeysa. Mohamed Said ‘Gees’ attended secondary education at Sheikh Secondary School moving to Mogadishu in the late 1960s where he lived for a few years. He acted as director of the Academy for Peace and Development in Hargeysa. After the 2010 national election in Somaliland, he was appointed Ministry of Finance.

Interview with Hussein Ali Duale ‘Awil’, 12<sup>th</sup> August, 2009, Hargeysa. Born in the British Protectorate, Hussein Ali Duale pursued secondary education in Somaliland and Aden, and military training in the United Kingdom. He was one of the young officials who planned and attempted a military coup in 1961 to protest against terms and conditions of the 1960 unification. When interviewed, he acted as Somaliland Ministry of Finance.

Interview with Sahara Abdulqadir Haji Ahmed, 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2009, Hargeysa. She married a well-known Somaliland entrepreneur, who financed education (journalism courses) for some Somalis in Egypt and started a printing-house business in the Protectorate. In the 1950s, they moved to Mogadishu living there for several years.

Interviews with Benvenuto Francesco Isaaq, 5<sup>th</sup> October 2010, 12<sup>th</sup> January 2011, Rome. Born in the early 1930s, Benvenuto Francesco Isaaq grew up in a Catholic orphanage in Afgooye. He moved to Mogadishu in his teens attending the Catholic school and working for their printing-house. He was a member of the Somali Youth League. After pursuing further education in Italy, he became a civil law notary and worked in Mogadishu before fleeing the country and moving to Italy in early 1990s.

#### Anonymous Interviews

Interview 1, 26<sup>th</sup> March 2009. A representative of the Somali government in the 1970s and 1980s.

Interview 2, 15<sup>th</sup> March 2008. Born in the 1930s in the southern region of *Somalia Italiana*. Supporter of the ‘pro-Italia’, later of the HDMS. Pursued education in Italy before returning and settling in Mogadishu. Left Somalia in the early 1990s.

Interview 3, 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2009. An acquaintance of Mohamed Haji Hussein, leader of the Somali Youth League, and later of the Great Somali League. Born in Mogadishu in 1950 (circa) where the interviewee attended school, pursuing university training in Egypt and Eastern Europe.

Interview 4, 24<sup>th</sup> June, 2009. Born in 1940 (circa) in the British Protectorate, the interviewee’s father was involved in local politics, supporting the Somali National League. The interviewee lives in Somaliland and works as a journalist.

